

spare rib

APRIL
No. 45
30p

**"I feel like
Marje Proops
sometimes"—**

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IN FACTORIES**

**THE GREAT
COVER UP—
NEW SERIES
ON FASHION**

**HIS AND HER
HOUSEWORK—
DOMESTIC
MILITANCY**

**SHORT STORY
FROM MEXICO**

**"I never intended
to see JAWS..."**





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spare Rib

April 1976 Cover

Industrial nurse at Garrard Engineering, Swindon. Photos by Angela Phillips (IFL)

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Irish Machismo

*Dear Spare Rib,

Why 'Catholic Women in Northern Ireland' (*Spare Rib* 43)? How much more to the point if the article had been on Women in Northern Ireland. Why perpetuate artificial sectarian differences? Northern Ireland, as your article points out, is an underdeveloped neglected backward miserable country. The worst sufferers are women, whatever their religion or politics. The whole Northern Ireland war is kept going by machismo; this is the little boy with horror weapons who won't "give in", who won't allow the "other side" to exist, and who wants to show how "brave" he is. Machismo behaviour, basis of "manliness" is infantile, counter-productive and entirely horrible in its realisation in the N. Ireland political scene, on both sides.

Although some women have been conned into joining in, most women are basically too sensible to enjoy torture, kneecapping, murder and all the rest. In any case, although your historical background of the reasons for the current war is OK, not too much is said about women, and what there is doesn't bring out how deprived all of them are – not just Catholics. The latter have the added burden of continuous child-bearing and brainwashing by the Church on their so-called roles – like supporting the men who feel useless if they look after children – instead obviously of finding out whether the "women's role" if performed by men or anyone else is "useless" or not – and if it is, to do something about it.

The games that male children play are no arena for women. It is our job, and yours, *Spare Rib*, especially, to point out that women's problems are the result of men's games and that it is as women that we must unite to save the children from themselves and ourselves as human beings.

Love,
Pauline Long

Nationalism, women and the left

*Dear sisters,

I thought the article on Ireland, from a political point of view, was excellent in as much as people like myself see the women's struggle as an integral part of the struggle for socialism. For this reason many of us are hesitant about the women's movement because the class politics are not stressed and indeed sometimes ignored.

The fight in Ireland is against British imperialism – true, the National Question (border) has to be resolved and for this reason most of the left in Britain have difficulty aligning themselves with the Irish struggle. This of course is a bit annoying, frustrating, for there are clear indications that there are those in Ireland trying to guide the struggle to socialist lines. However, the big stumbling block is the National Question, but we haven't the bloody time or energy

to try to explain all this to the left in England. The article made a definite, if somewhat basic, stab at this. I felt the article very worthwhile as an introduction to the struggle here. I hope it broadens the outlook and commitment from within the W.M.

The only criticism I have, and it's only because I lived here, is that it was somewhat outdated. The very real dread of death from the Protestant assassinations, the dreary miserable lives of women with husbands in jail, weren't illustrated. You could do a piece about women's lives revolving round the weekly visit to the Kesh, and the non-existence of social life here.

Liberty, love, strength,
R.S.

Armagh
Northern Ireland

Mary McKay replies:

While I share the hopes expressed by the writer for a progressive women's politics in Ireland, I think that an appeal for unity between Protestant and Catholic women is abstract. I think there is no way that a feminist unity could happen between the two communities prior to the growth of women's politics within the oppressed Catholic minority.

I don't say this simply because Catholic women are the "more oppressed" – that is a complex question – but because it is the Catholic people who are involved in the kind of radical struggle which can open women up to discovering the capacity for change; whereas the Protestant stance is now a defensive and conservative one.

But even within the Catholic community there are enormous difficulties for women pushing forward a politics of their own. The work to be done is just as basic, slow and uphill as it is in Britain. With so many things dividing women in N. Ireland as everywhere else, women's solidarity can only grow from social actions based on very concrete conditions which can unite women. The article in Spare Rib 41 about the Armagh playgroup and the attempt to break into women's isolation on a housing estate, is an example

of the way some women in N. Ireland are beginning this serious long-term work, in a way that isn't abstract.

This is the only way women will get the strength to challenge politically their men's machismo. Meantime, they are not acting in an anti-feminist way, nor against their own interests as women, to take part with the men in fighting wholeheartedly the violence of the British state in their communities.

While I share Ms Long's contempt for masculine politics of competitive violence and heroics, I think she overlooks the fact that the main force which Catholic women have had to fight daily has been the machismo and arrogance of British soldiers.

Hush money

*Dear Spare Rib,

Re. Wages for Housework. First, I think the good side to this campaign is that it will – hopefully – encourage men and women to review their idea of housework, i.e. to realise that it is actually work. When something is given monetary value in this society it automatically begins to raise itself to a position of some worth in people's eyes.

But, basically I am opposed to this campaign. I feel that by demanding pay for housework women are reinforcing the roles they are already set in, that they alone are the ones who do the housework. But my main point is this: if they also go out to work and/or their husband does not share the housework, this is an unfair situation. Therefore if they receive money it will be compensation money. It will never be anything else. It is like giving a tranquilliser to someone with a problem: it is a help but it is not getting near the root of the trouble. In fact it discourages you from doing this. Paying someone to do housework is to ignore the real problem, that the work is not being shared. The moment you pay women for housework, you've given in, you've accepted compensation and admitted defeat.

Love,
Joanna Boissevain
London W2

* indicates that this letter has been cut for reasons of space.

No musical comment?

Dear Spare Rib,

Why does the recent issue, 43, in the Music Review Section by Marion Fudger not attempt to make some sort of comment on the feminist orientation/content of the albums mentioned? I realise that personal taste may be partially responsible, but when I see an album referred to in your magazine without comment, I wonder if I can assume it's not offensive by sexist lyrics/dust cover/attitudes.

The discussion of Elkie Brooks, an artist with whom I am not familiar, offers some comment on her ability but little on the feminist content of her songs, if any. Since I have only recently read an article on her in *The Guardian*, complete with coy prose worthy of *The Sun* or *Mirror*, I hesitate to buy an album, an unknown quantity without at least some assurance that I will not find the album sexist. Although I would readily agree art should not be judged on narrow grounds, as a practical guide I would appreciate some hint in your music review of the album's orientation. Your book review section is excellent in this respect. In sisterhood,
D.L. Austin

Marion Fudger replies:

The reason albums were mentioned without comment was that the records were not available to us for review. In future we will not mention LPs without some critical comment unless it is clear that we are just listing info and haven't been able to hear the record. We were very grateful to receive your criticism, it played an important part in a recent discussion about the music section.

Food for thought

*Dear Spare Rib,

I have to write you all a few words about what could be done to improve your magazine, just an idea which might be helpful. Why not have a section on food and cooking, because I think a lot of women buy foods to feed their husband's desires and tastes instead of their own.

Males tend to like heavy and expensive food and women like light food, but often have to eat what hubby eats since a separate diet is expensive, time consuming and isolationist. In my opinion women should think about the quality of the food they eat and stick to their own diets as this means better self discipline and understanding towards other women. It is time we put our own bellies before men's bellies.
Yours sincerely,
Miss M. Sandwich
London N8

Dear Editors,

So please, dear editors, by all means let the libertarian portfolio bulge with tampons, morning sickness, vibrator ads and cystic fibroids, if these are the burning issues. Only don't exclude the occasional outburst of flowers, perfume, frivolity, some cheap poetry, deep green solace, erudition, wit.

(Still) in Sisterhood

"And it is in this context that I come to the second item in the same issue that gave me real hope for the future. I refer to the letter from Barbara, aged 17. The more young people who read *Spare Rib* and other progressive literature, the better. Such literature can only enhance their political consciousness, without which the drastic action necessary to do away with our present iniquitous social system and replace it with a just social order for the working masses can never be successfully achieved."

(Still) in sisterhood,
Myra Childs, London SE1

Dear Editor,

The State of Israel does not as yet have a written constitution. Basic laws, which will eventually be embodied in a constitution, have from time to time been promulgated. Among such basic laws now being proposed, is one sponsored by Member of Knesset Shulamit Aloni plus another eight of her Parliament colleagues. Ms. Aloni's proposed basic law deals with the status and rights of women in this country.

For political reasons, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel, saw fit to assure his coalition partners of the religious parties (he himself represents the Labor Party) who are very much opposed to any portion of this law, that he will not permit the passage of it.

A full explanation of the position of women in Israel is not

We, the members of the Israel Feminist Movement, believe that it is of vital importance for every woman everywhere to help fight this attempt to keep full equality from Israel's entire female population. We ask our sisters abroad to publicize and plead our case to the world at large; to write letters and bring other forms of international pressure on P.M. Rabin and other members of the Israel government. And, as we seek international help, be assured that we ourselves are continuing to fight for this fundamental right to human equality before the law.

dance...dance...dance...dance...

 SPRING INTO ACTION
 WITH spare Rib
 FEMINISTS & FRIENDS
 DANCE WITH THE
 DERELICTS
 ...AT THE OLD RED LION PUB...
 ..ST. JOHN STREET, ANGEL, LONDON N1...
 12 FEB.... THEN EVERY SECOND THURSDAY...
 ...FEB 26.... MARCH 11.... MARCH 25... APRIL 8...
 8-11 PM.. 50p... CLAIMANTS 30p
all welcome.....
 dance...dance...dance...dance...

Dear *Spare Rib*,

Subsidised treatment, equipment or goods are seldom the best, perhaps because the parties concerned with financing the various operations are rarely the people who are going to benefit from them. I know the women's movement is based on socialist principles with which (as you may have guessed) I don't agree, but surely it is time for us to re-assess how much we can expect from others. Things are never free: somewhere along the line, someone's going to pay. I know that women in general are among the worst-off members of society and justly desire to have a larger cut of the national cake, but by demanding more from the authorities we are merely shifting our dependence from menfolk to the state. My ideal of liberated woman is independent and free to choose what she personally wants.

**FOR MORE LETTERS
TURN TO PAGE 8**

His & Her Housework

Wendy Whitfield gives some hints on taking industrial action on the home front.



AFTER THE FIRST FEW MONTHS the novelty of marriage wore off; I soon realised that the mechanics of being a wife were oppressive. Within a year, I was ready to throw in the towel and admit defeat.

As a child, I'd had plenty of freedom and independence and being a tomboy I'd fought (literally) for some sort of equality. This was the advantage of coming from a broken family, which I can see now: however, at the time I thought I might be missing out on the so-called advantages of a "normal family life". So as soon as I was old enough I found myself settling down with the first boy who asked me to marry him – and felt rather smug about it. We were going to replace what I'd missed. But I soon found out that I hadn't missed much. The future looked pretty predictable.

Entirely unable to go it alone, I broke away by latching on to another boy – Dave. This time, compelled by doubts, fear and perhaps love, I married him. After a year I realised that maybe I'd rushed things again. I couldn't stand my husband touching me – though I like him very much as a person.

Unable, yet again, to control my own destiny, I placed myself in the hands of a psychiatrist at the Family Planning Clinic. She told me that I'd lost my libido. Right from the start she accepted that all the problems were mine and, after the first interview, never asked to see my husband again. She said I was bitter and resentful from having been an abandoned child, that I was punishing Dave and not allowing him close in case I was abandoned again. She advised me to let him make love to me even if I didn't feel like it. There may have been an element of truth in what she said, but I suspected her implication that the man must be clear of any blame in a breakdown. I was made to feel a sick person, married to a strong, healthy male who would guide me back to normality again.

At this point, maybe I'll introduce Dave. I no longer think of him as my husband. He's a lovely, understanding man, who has borne with me through all sorts of battles, verbal and otherwise. He is intelligent and has always been sympathetic to the women's movement. He is as conscientious and unselfish as a man can be in our culture.

After this first traumatic period, I began to realise that I resented many aspects of my partner's behaviour sub-consciously, and that I was trying to suppress this. A year at college, in a very free environment, clearly underlined my marriage's restrictions on my activities and relationships. I was torn between the two worlds of continuing with my studying and self-development and coping with my domestic responsibilities – washing, shopping, cooking, being home every evening and weekend with my husband. Back in a nine-to-five job, this dilemma was exacerbated. My

studying was replaced by unrewarding labour and the same old chores.

I'd been reading a lot of women's literature – *The Female Eunuch*, *Wedlocked Women*, *Spare Rib* and the like. We were both becoming involved in left-wing politics. I participated in a strike at my place of work. So it seemed quite natural that I should pursue a course of industrial action in my domestic situation, where I was working long hours while the Boss read or watched the telly.

After the usual nagging, the disguised and undisguised gibes, I decided on an all-out fight. All or nothing. I went on strike. I announced that from now on I would do only *my* shopping, cooking and cleaning. I would not clean up, nor would I keep up my incessant tidying, writing lists, washing and returning milk bottles, putting away the dishes that he left to drain instead of drying them, defrosting the fridge or cleaning the cooker, clearing away the coffee cups or writing to his relatives. In short, I would do no more than a man would do. Dave thought I was joking.

After a few days it ceased to be funny. The battle began in earnest. His reactions and behaviour immediately fell into a recognisable pattern. At first I was treated with humour and affection. Then I was gently admonished, and then firmly dealt with, like a naughty child. When this failed – well, he'd done all a reasonable man could be expected to do, so I'd be left to "get out of it" by myself.

At this stage, it is important that personalities be kept out of the dispute: all discussion must be based on the assumption that marriage in a capitalist society inevitably produces a conflict of interests, and that it is in the interests of both partners to fight this. We as women must not be afraid to keep bringing up the subject and forcing our partners to reason through their objections. It is up to us to remember that men are conditioned to expect servicing, and even if they acknowledge equality in theory, they will relax all too soon into the role society prepares them for. I learnt that the same applies to us, and I had to reappraise my own attitude to my role. Was it really necessary to keep dusting and cleaning? Wasn't it enough to wait until it really looked untidy? Together, we had to work out a common definition of "dirty" and "untidy". I've read that men *camp*. Certainly, Dave's standards, like most men's had been lower than mine; now I was expecting him not only to keep a reasonable standard, but to emulate the unreasonably high standards set out in magazines and on television.

Eventually Dave was forced to start negotiating, in his own interest. Luckily we both liked each other enough not to take the easy way out and walk out. I suggested a rota, as the only way of reminding him of his commitments. This led to a bid to humiliate me: according

to him, the degradation was mine for making such a suggestion — not his for forgetting to wash his own underpants.

Then there were his attempts to bring in support from outside — in the form of friends and, more deadly, the in-laws. This proved a very successful tactic on his part: I'd be lying if I said I didn't have my own doubts about the struggle. Their shock, dismay and disapproval increased these doubts, but I gained fresh strength when I was accused of not being able to love my husband. This sounded all too familiar. Hadn't my psychiatrist persuaded me to ignore my own feelings rather than question the status quo? Why do women have to humiliate themselves in this way to prove their love? Why can't we *enjoy* loving our partners? Isn't it humiliating that men expect this kind of "devotion" and wouldn't I have left Dave if I didn't love him? All the same, relatives proved to be the deadliest of "enemies". And I haven't sorted that one out yet.

It was finally agreed that the major chores were to be done in turns. The first stage was won. It worked well at first, but then Dave slipped into a decline again. He developed certain "last stands". He absolutely refused (and still does) to clean the loo. I tried all tactics, ranging from asking, cajoling, joking, teasing to bullying and humiliating. None worked. I have shelved that one for the time being. Maybe I'll have to compromise.

When it came to washing, Dave worked to rule. He never realised the need of tackling the dirty socks under the bed, or the occasional washing like curtains and dressing gowns. I resorted to noticing them for him by popping them into the linen basket at the last moment. Tiresome though it is to do his thinking for him, he's beginning to get the message, and is starting to develop a little professional pride. Similarly, he pretended not to understand the process of sorting out colours. After a few of my pale things had been ruined, I had to start teaching him. He never minded if his handkerchiefs were the colour of his Levis.

All this pretence at ignorance, I found, is an exercise in defiance. Men can't really be that stupid. He not only succeeded in making me feel like a tyrant, but also failed to lighten my load, as I had to think about his turn as well as mine. The only way to tackle this obtuseness is to discuss it. Don't be afraid to "keep bringing it up". That's all part of the same trick — treating it all as a joke and ignoring the problem.

When Dave saw he really looked like "losing", he played his best card. He waited until the traditional time for family drama, Christmas. With the extra work load brought by visiting relatives, his share increased somewhat. Well, he left his chores right until Christmas Eve. There he was cleaning the stairs until three in the morning. What he found to do for two and a half hours I'll never

know. I think it was to make me feel guilty, as there was a regular chorus of curses going on. But I'd learnt that the best way not to feel guilty was to go out, and so I did.

Next day I regretted it. The in-laws settled down round a cosy fire. Cheer and goodwill? Treason. Judas with barely concealed delight told his mother that he'd been cleaning the stairs. On Christmas Eve. For two and a half hours.

I again considered throwing in the towel. Did he really want me on his terms or none at all? It was a cold New Year.

When I decided to work part-time in order to continue with my studies, I very nearly lost all the ground we'd made. With the novelty of having more time to myself at home, I indulged in orgies of housework, intending always to start studying "tomorrow". Dave was delighted. It wouldn't be long before he was enjoying my domestic services again. By the time I came to my senses and realised that I should be separating my domestic and studying activities, the rot had set in. It took quite a while to realise that studying at home involves considerable disadvantages, especially if you are a woman. It is all too easy to fritter away the best hours of the day shopping and cleaning. It took longer for Dave to acknowledge this, as it was against his interests to do so. He preferred the explanation that I really did prefer tidying up his mess left on my drawing board the night before, to studying.

Dave frequently works from home himself, and does not suffer from the same compulsion to tidy up or do the shopping before settling down to work. Here, we women must take the lesson from men and assess our priorities. The problem has been overcome to some extent however now that we have an extra room which has been converted into a workroom.

Many more problems arose, and keep arising. Should I work full-time when our funds were low — even though I was earning enough in my part-time job to support myself? Should I move two hundred miles north in order to continue at college, alone, or would Dave consider giving up *his* job and moving north with me?

Whenever such a problem crops up, I first try to imagine Dave's arguments and resentments. Then, ignoring his reluctance, I introduce a discussion. I always try to keep it light and humorous: after all, business is business. I am always prepared to reconsider and a sensible compromise may be reached. Capitalism makes men and women into an industrial team, where the woman merely exists to service one of industry's cogs — her partner. Their respective roles and activities are polarised and sanctioned as such by society. A constant fight and vigil is needed to repel the pressures from all sides to give in. The result of capitulating to the system

is two isolated individuals tied only by the same address and bearing little resemblance to the two people who initially liked each other. Forced to maintain the illusion of a contented couple, they perpetuate their own misery and dilemma and that of every other couple. They may take "lovers", split up or spend years wondering why they settled down with the wrong person. Women may find some vicarious pleasure in advising younger women how to make *their* relationships work: "Men are all the same . . ." "You can't change them" (so *you* do the changing); meanwhile they take every opportunity to complain and to criticise their own men.

If it hadn't been for the women's movement, who knows, I might have been wandering bitterly along any of these paths. But I think that I now have the chance of making a human relationship work. Dave's mother has told me that women's literature is "dangerous", since I apply it to my own situation and it unsettles me. But if my dissatisfaction with the marriage institution is "all a part of growing up", why aren't we ever taught or warned about it? Isn't the answer that society has been found to run more smoothly when men and women are screwed into these illusory matches, that it is in the interests of the rulers of capitalist society to keep us in our traditional places, thinking that chaos would reign if all we women were strong and free enough to run our own lives and make our own decisions? After all, we might just decide that this is a crummy society. □



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JO SPENCE

Less than impartial

Dear *Spare Rib*,

It seems that the account of the five women of their encounter with psychiatric hospitals is less than impartial (*Stretched to breaking point, Spare Rib* 43). Your analysis of the double-bind situation which I codify now as the "active-passive" polarity for the sake of brevity, is indeed applicable to most women. It is very difficult to resolve and can cause debilitating emotional distress. It is also correct that a substantial proportion of psychiatric hospitals are founded on authoritarian, hierarchical structures. Nevertheless, I would like to make the following points in the hope of redressing the biased impression that the article tends to give.

The reports of these five women, which are imprecise with respect to age, date, duration of stay and follow-up, suggest that they were admitted to large psychiatric hospitals with a patient population ranging in size from 900 to 1600 or over. The Government policy since the early 1960's has been to progressively reduce the size of these hospitals and ultimately to close them down. They are to be replaced by smaller psychiatric units of about 50 to 250 beds in District General Hospitals for those individuals who require short-term in-patient treatment. These units are also to provide out-patient and day-care services. For the type of patient who is currently hospitalized on a long-term basis, community-care and community-nursing are to be instituted. Such small units are already in existence in considerable numbers, and have contributed significantly to reducing the size of patient populations in the large psychiatric hospitals.

The main obstacle to the swift and complete implementation of this Government policy lies in the shortage of funds for the heavy capital investment programme which it would entail. There is a chronic shortage of money available for geriatric facilities for example, let alone for the extensive provisions required for psycho-geriatric patients. However, when this policy is eventually fully implemented, the community, consisting of both women and men, will have to undertake the massive responsibility of containing and supporting those who are either so severely disturbed as to necessitate long-term hospitalization by present-day standards, or those who require a "resting place to get away from it all". This is an undertaking which is not easily handled, and which the accounts of the five women, all under the age of fifty and none severely incapacitated, explicitly or implicitly emphasize. In this context, a discussion of political orientation such as Capitalism or its alternatives seems to be not immediately relevant.

Finally, some comments on certain aspects of the reports them-

selves: Psychiatric institutions are not resting places, although there sometimes is a tendency for staff to collude with patients in viewing them so. Nor are psychiatric institutions capable of producing ready answers, and patients should be the first to object to an assumed mantle of omniscience. Elaine, the once-heroin-addict, makes it quite apparent that she used psychiatric facilities for her own convenience and purposes. It is not clear whether the benefits accrued to her from her last abode were permanent. Susan, having been a social worker, must have had some idea of what a psychiatric hospital was like. In her activities as a case-worker, she must have compiled numerous files on her clients, some even in a lesser time than two sessions.

In the vast majority of cases, ECT does not produce gross memory disturbance. What is experienced is post-ECT confusion which will disrupt retrieval of past events, but this clears up in a matter of days to a few weeks from the end of treatment. Then memory returns intact. Yours sincerely,
L. Ziyal Blakemore
London SW16

Balancing the record

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Your five women and their psychiatric hospital experiences (Feb '76 issue) are so different from the treatment I received after an overdose, that I would like to balance the record somewhat.

I was seen twice for lengthy periods at King's College Hospital where I landed, by a somewhat ineffectual psychiatrist, but he sent me with my full agreement to the Community Psychiatric Unit of the South Western Hospital in Stockwell, that being my home catchment area.

The very first day was daunting, but from the second, when they came to the conclusion I was no longer a suicide risk, I had nothing but kindness, warmth, affection and very careful but unobtrusive care.

Quite a lot of the staff were coloured, a fact I mention specifically, because they seem extraordinarily good with mentally disturbed patients, perhaps because of their spontaneous warmth and temperament.

We were encouraged to take an interest in occupational therapy and what started for me with pasting rice, lentils, beans and pasta onto a piece of plywood, has now turned into ILEA evening classes in collage work.

For two months I was an extremely happy patient who wished she could have stayed longer. But in retrospect my return to so-called normality was miraculously well-judged.

I admit I am middle class, a journalist and not mentally sub-normal, therefore I have the advantage of being articulate.

But there were others in my unit who were illiterate, mentally disturbed, emotionally crippled, obsessed and tormented. None of them were treated with anything but kindness as far as I could judge.

They did, admittedly, feel terrorised at the very possibility of having to talk at group sessions, which they were not obliged to, but all admitted that listening to the problems of the more voluble was of great benefit.

Maybe the Psychiatric Unit at Stockwell is an exception, in which case I was lucky. But I do know the staff is continually saddened by attacks in the press on the work they are doing to the best of their ability.

Yours,
Caren Meyer
London SW9

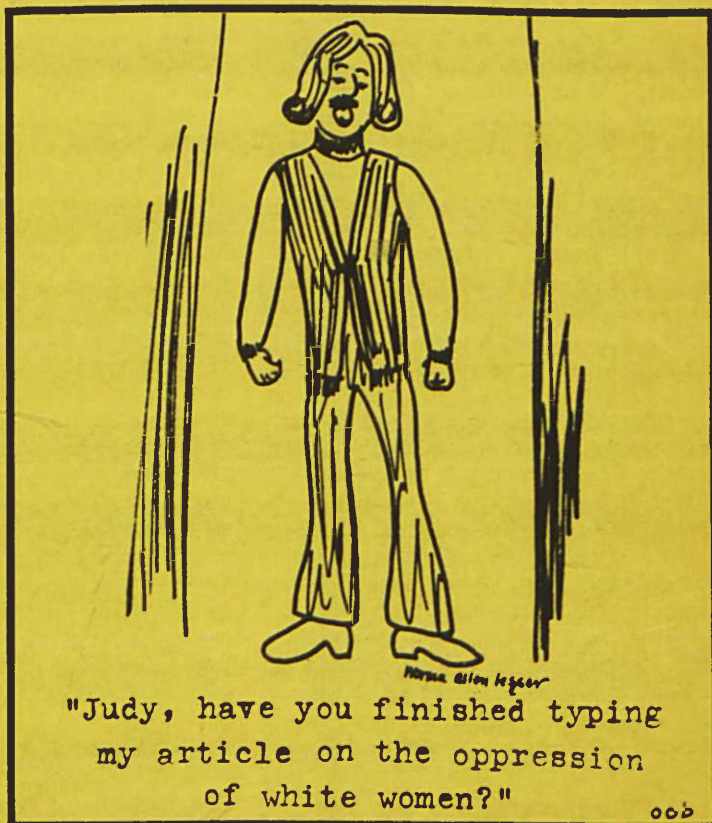
Rosie Parker replies:

Our aim was to reveal the destructive attitudes facing the five women interviewed. "We were treated like children," they said, constantly watched, ordered about, etc. The attitudes confronting emotionally disturbed people are rooted in society as a whole and merely writ large in the institutions. Society needs to change not just the size of psychiatric institutions. Moreover, we particularly criticised the "medical model" (regarding disturbed people as ill) which induces false expectations in patients and dishonesty in their helpers. If anything, psychiatric units in District General Hospitals will encourage the explanation that disturbed people are sick and open to cure in the same manner as someone with a diagnosed physical illness.

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Anyway, where are these small units? The Department of Health's policy from the early '60s may have been the reduction of large psychiatric hospitals but in 1973 (the latest year for which figures are available) the percentage of beds in hospitals and units of various sizes for the "mentally ill" doesn't suggest that much progress has been made. 30.4% were in hospitals with 1500 to 2000 beds, only 9.3% were in units with 100 to 500 beds, and no more than 3.2% were in units with less than 100 beds. An article on women in large psychiatric institutions is hardly obsolete.

As you say, community care is to be instituted. We are planning an article on it in our series on help seeking. In 1973 there were 3,562 places for people in work-shops and day centres compared to 99,795 occupied hospital beds. If with the cuts, lack of funds is holding up the development of community facilities surely we should question distribution of resources and look at what you call the "political orientation" of the situation. It is difficult to make sweeping statements on ECT as no one knows exactly what it does to people or how. All we can do is to listen to the people who have had it - they tell us that it is a horrifying, frightening experience.





PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANGELA PHILLIPS

NURSING IN FACTORIES

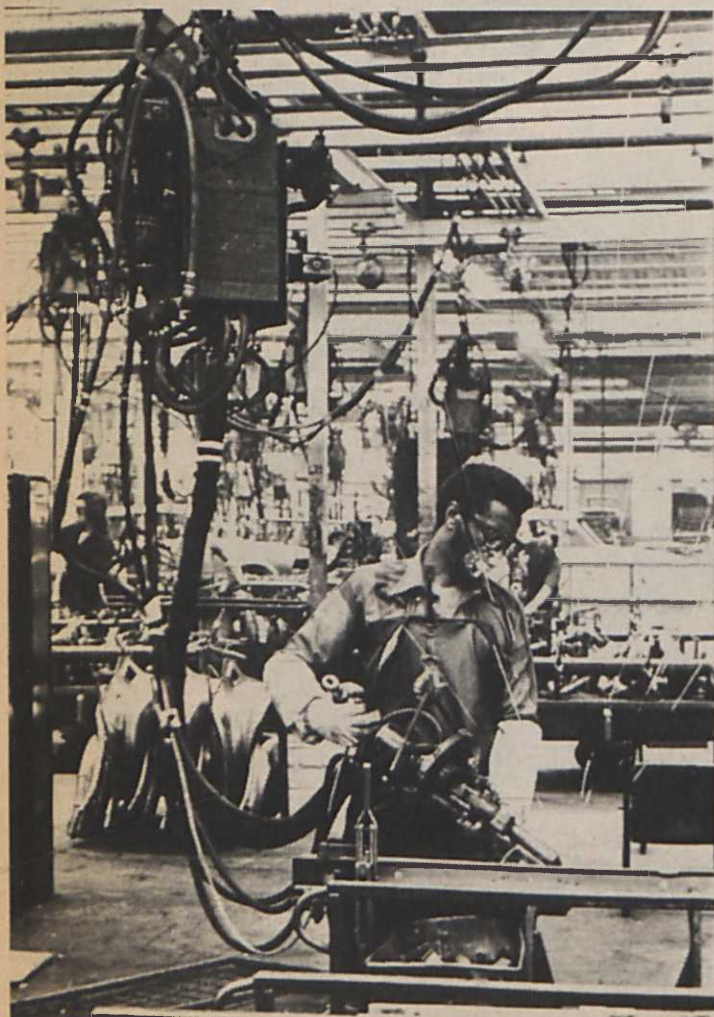
"Everybody who works here has a totally economic role. Nurses are purely service bodies to keep the men on the line. We are all here to make cars," — says British Leyland's industrial relations planning manager, Tom McDonald.

Spare Rib looks at nurses in industry.

Speke

British Leyland produces most British cars, tractors, trucks and buses. It is a huge organisation with plants all over this country and abroad. At the plant in Speke, Liverpool, the workforce is 5,000, nearly all men. Their health and welfare is looked after by a team of eight nurses, all members of APEX (Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff) and one sister, still in the Royal College of Nursing.

We talked to three nurses, who all had different reasons for going into industry. For sister Lil Butler it was a question of broadening her experience. Roz Duke, a Navy nurse until her marriage three and a half years ago, finds it more convenient to work at the same factory as her husband, and at first the money was better. (With increased militancy among hospital nurses, industrial nurses' wages are now ►



Welders wear safety gloves and gauntlets, eye and nose shields and heavy aprons. Even that is no protection if the heavy overhead machinery falls — it has happened. (British Leyland)

lower.) Irene Thomas has only been working at Speke since March 1975. She misses the continuity of nursing patients in hospital. "But you do get to know the men. They come in with personal problems, and there's more time to sit and talk. I feel like Marjorie Proops sometimes. The women don't come here as much, they're more reserved. One man came to ask about his wife. Their GP had said she needed an operation but didn't say why. You'd think their doctors would enlighten them."

Nurses are supposed to prevent health hazards on the shop floor, in lavatories and canteens. They do certain routine check-ups: leadworkers are blood screened every six weeks, welders are X-rayed once a year, and Lil Butler is arranging a cervical smear campaign. But the biggest problem they have to deal with is anxiety. This they put down to job insecurity and boredom. "20,000 redundancies are expected in British Leyland car division soon. The men don't know when they'll be in work. One week they'll be earning good money, then there'll be a lay-off and they'll earn none for seven weeks. A lot of them are on tranquillisers so they shouldn't be moving machinery or driving. GPs often don't advise them properly. If they come to me, I try to have them put into a quieter area for a time. If anyone has persistent stomach pains, I advise them to check for ulcers."

"It's not surprising they feel the strain. This is boring work, repeating the same three actions continually. Really you want robots. Little things blow up, and the men break."

"I try to get them to come here for every little thing. Little things can become big things." (British Leyland)

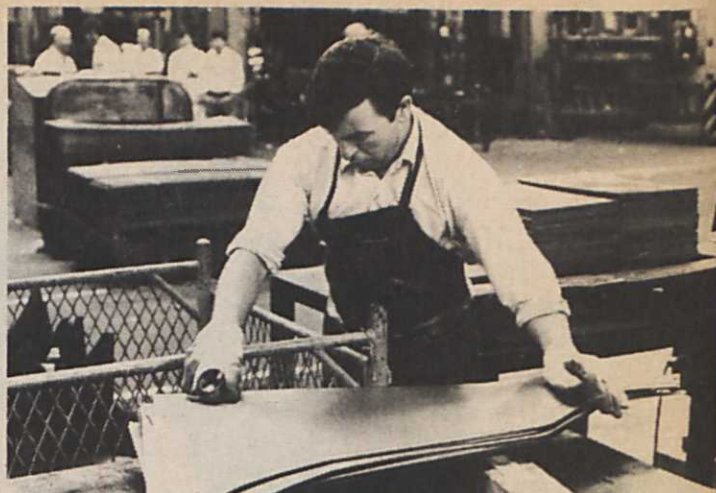
Lil felt the stress factor was less for women. (Perhaps because the few women shop floor workers are middle aged or over, without small children at home.) "They're a very happy workforce, nattering all day. If a woman's given a job she gets on with it without question. Women are used to doing two or three things at once. They're better equipped to deal with anxiety — they'll cry and rage or throw a pan. If a man hits anyone he can end up in court, unless he takes to wife-beating . . ."

The nurses also have to deal with accidents, mostly cuts from metal. Every accident and every visit to the surgery is recorded — in 17 days there were 1,750 visits and 200 accidents. The employees services manager, Peter Stubbs, said "We have a reasonable safety record. Our biggest problem has always been to persuade men to use safety equipment — it's uncomfortable and inconvenient." But, he admitted, "this is a dangerous place to work".

Safety precautions such as the thick insulated gloves and goggles some workers are supposed to wear often slow them down. Workers on piecework face a choice between safety with no bonus at the end of the week, or danger and reasonable take-home pay. As long as safety precautions hit the worker economically by eating into wages rather than profits, it's not surprising they're ignored. And safety precautions can make working conditions worse. For instance, rather than cut down the noise of machinery by sound-proofing, management may require workers operating it to wear ear-plugs. But if they wear ear-plugs, they can't exchange a single word for hours on end.

The most serious accidents at Speke British Leyland occur in the press shop, where components are moulded from sheet metal. Roz said, "We have a few amputations, not very nice when you have to find the other piece to take to the hospital. We have a lot of responsibility. There's no doctor to hand so you have to make up your own mind what to do." (A doctor visits for only one hour each day.) And yet the nurses complained of lack of respect for their decisions. "There's not enough communication between shop floor and surgery. The foremen allow men to start work without even consulting us."

While we were talking a foreman came in to ask if a man with broken toes could return to work. "No, he can't come back till he's discharged from hospital. If he comes here he'll have boxed ears as well as broken toes!"



"The majority of accidents with raw metal are unavoidable. The panels are very slippery to hold." (British Leyland)



Swindon

The Garrard Engineering factory in Swindon employs three industrial nurses for a workforce of 2,000. Part of the multinational Plessey Company, Garrard produces record players, mainly for export. The factory was originally located in Swindon to make use of the abundant female labour in a town where the main employer was the railways. There are nearly 1,500 women working in light assembly and 750 men employed mainly on heavy machinery (metal presses), maintenance and management. The economic crisis has led to the company amalgamating two factories in one place, resulting in large numbers of redundancies.



Most of the workers belong to AUEW (Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers) or ASTMS (Association of Supervisory, Technical and Managerial Staffs). The nurses are rather isolated members of COHSE (Confederation of Health Service Employees) and don't really fit into any grade or structure. Sister Warman, who has worked at Garrards for 18 years, feels: "Management should be a bit more educated about our qualifications. It's not too bad here, but some people treat nurses as glorified first-aiders."

Fred Ditchburn, welfare services manager, is in charge of safety at Garrards. He doesn't know what qualifications the nurses have, but feels it's unimportant provided they have the right background in industry. "Hospital-trained nurses are less experienced with first aid."

Sister Warman came into industry because: "I wanted to get nearer to the people. Hospitals take sisters away from the people they nurse." She knows workers often come to see her instead of going to their GP and feels it's because the nurses are more understanding — "Sometimes listening is all they need."

Women dusting components.

◀ "It's the women who suffer most, because they're trying to do two jobs." (Garrards)

With so many women workers, she often has to deal with the symptoms of cystitis and thrush, with period pains and menopausal problems. There are two resting rooms, and though the nurses cannot prescribe medicines, they can usually give advice and sympathy. Sister Warman wants people to come to the surgery for anything, "large, small, mental, physical", though she knows that to the management "We're just here to stick on plasters and to keep people at work."

Mr Ditchburn wasn't even convinced that employing nurses improved on the old system of training workers in first aid. "As soon as you establish a central surgery, people come in for other problems. It restricts the time available to the nurse for more positive things, like preventing industrial hazards. In the long term we would like to bring in nurses at the planning stage of the plant, but nurses are not engineers, they wouldn't want to be involved in engineering."

However, the sister said she *would* like to be more involved in discussions on work safety, but there never were any. Nurses are often the last to know when a new safety measure has been introduced. She is at present trying to find a day release course in occupational health, but the only course she can find would mean either going to London for six months or taking three days a week off.

Working with poisons:

◀ "Do you teach a kid to swim, or fence off every stretch of water in the country?" (Garrards)

Most accidents at Garrards occur through losing concentration while working machinery or tripping over boxes in the cramped conditions of the factory floor. There are notices everywhere saying "No Running". Ditchburn claims it's more important to teach people to avoid danger than to remove the danger itself. After all, "Modern technology develops so fast that side effects of new materials are not discovered for some time" — on this basis he remarked, "Do you teach a kid to swim, or fence off every stretch of water in the country?"

Sister Warman is sure the problem of stress has got worse since she's worked there. "It's mostly pressure of work — these days they work a lot faster and they've got more people telling them to increase production. There's been a big increase in stress since the introduction of measured day work instead of piecework." (Measured day work has been ▶



resisted by many unions for this reason. Instead of being paid for what you produce — the piecework bonus system — you are paid at a fixed hourly rate and you have to produce a fixed amount every hour. The speed is set by timing selected workers performing certain tasks, and then by various pseudo-scientific adjustments, arriving at a “standard time” for the job. The speed of the conveyor belts is adjusted accordingly.)

“The firm went through a bad period with a lot of redundancies a year or so ago. People were under a lot of stress, but it seems to have cooled off. Now it’s the women who suffer most, because they’re trying to do two jobs.”

The eggboxes contain screws, which she fits at the rate of 310 an hour. (Garrards)



One record player comes off the line every minute. (Garrards)

“You can’t take sides”

Although the Health and Safety Commission and its Executive, set up in 1975, have been given new powers to enforce safety regulations in industry, safety is still an area on which employers try to economise. If they employ nurses at all, they may have them only on the day shift, and at night trust to workers with some training in first aid. This is one reason why nurses’ hours, wages and conditions vary enormously around the country. Another is that they are not negotiated centrally, but individually in each factory.





At British Leyland nurses are part of the clerical structure. Before they joined APEX, they were graded with the cleaners. In fact the ordinary nurses are still paid less than the lowest manual workers (the staff cleaners who are unionised get this lowest manual rate, though agency cleaners get much less). The rationale for this system is that manual workers get more money for less security, while clerical staff have more job security and fringe benefits.

The nurses felt they should be graded with the supervisory staff. "After all, we are looking after the workers . . ." Peter Stubbs explained that the standard job evaluation scheme for clerical work doesn't fit because nurses don't have responsibility for money or for junior staff — responsibility for lives was evidently not counted.

On this APEX scale Roz Duke earns £50 basic for a 40 hour week, Irene Thomas £45.88. Overtime is not compulsory, but they feel obliged to do it. Roz said, "The men on the shop floor just clock on and clock off. My husband can't understand why I do so much overtime. It's not a sense of dedication, it's our attitude. I would worry if I went home early and there was no one here." At Garrards Sister Warman (COHSE) earns about £45 for a 40 hour week, plus an extra £3 payable only in weeks when she's working, not if she's off sick or on holiday.

There is no general agreement either about such things as maternity leave. Tom McDonald said, "Maternity leave? We don't have it. Our females don't have babies. The few who do leave. I doubt if we'd give special concessions even to a male single parent. We'd prefer to employ someone who didn't need concessions. After all, every minute you lose, you lose a car."

Most industrial nurses are young, married women. They need maternity leave and they need decent pay. Roz said, "I don't think it's possible to rely on your husband's wage. A woman has got to work." What unions can they join to push for what they need, and how much can the unions help.

COHSE, NUPE (National Union of Public Employees), NALGO (National and Local Government Officers' Association) and the RCN are the biggest organisations for nurses, but they are based mainly in hospitals. Only COHSE and the RCN have nurses in industry as well. In some ways it makes more sense for industrial nurses to join unions like APEX which include other workers in the same factory and so bring the nurses into a structure which could provide solidarity actually in their workplace. And theoretically there's more possibility of workers in the same union cooperating to see that safety regulations are enforced — even improved. But consciousness about fighting hazards at work is still not high, on the shop floor or in the leadership of most trade unions. So the health service unions are perhaps more likely to bring up health issues, because of the specific content of the nurses' job.

The tradition that nurses are professionals, not manual workers, has been fostered within hospital nursing. To many nurses this sense of difference is very important. Their uniform sets them apart, as mother and matron. In the factory they are isolated, not feeling part of the workforce or of management, though they service both. "We are in the middle. If men identified us with management they'd never open up at all. You can't take sides, you've got to be separate."

They feel a conflict of interest because they are employed only for the sake of efficiency and profit; their own desire for professional status aligns them with management; yet they feel sympathy for the workers. Their position is important because of the part it plays in curative and preventative medicine and health care, even though the part has developed only as a by-product of the need to "keep the men on the lines".

Jill Nicholls and Angela Phillips

Additional Reading:

The Hazards of Work: How to Fight Them by Patrick Kinnersly. Workers' Handbook No.1, published by Pluto Press, Unit 10, Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Rd, London NW1 8LH. 90p from bookshops. *Health and Safety at Work*, a TUC Guide. Available from the TUC, Congress House, Great Russell St, London WC1B 3LS, for 25p plus postage.

"...and they sewed fig leaves together..."

Do we hide behind our clothes or use them to draw attention to what is hidden? Lisa Tickner looks at changing fashions and how they have been used to keep women in their place.

In the autumn of 1974 a session on fashion was included in a course at Middlesex Polytechnic on *Women and Art*, and two things became clear from our discussions: firstly that the history of costume was worth examining from a feminist perspective; and secondly, that many women shared my own ambivalence about contemporary fashion, whilst rarely discussing it for fear of being thought trivial.

It is this intellectual taboo which gives a confessional, even a conspiratorial, tone to the introductory passages of Kathryn Perutz's book *Beyond the Looking Glass* on the beauty culture: but they are passages which evoke a response in all of us, I think, even if our own adolescence was not American.

"My interest in the topic is rarely objective. I'm part of the beauty culture: it put lipstick on me when I was 12, a tiny bra around my chest when I had nothing to fill it with and had me reaching for the hair lightener when I was 13... I stand to the beauty culture much as I do to America, and have with it an uneasy, respectful, guilty, religious involvement from which I can't exile myself because there is nowhere to go that wouldn't remind me of what I had left. This culture made me. As a believer I am appalled by heresy. I am alarmed by the abuse and implications, by morbid self-preoccupation and the substitution of concern with appearance over self knowledge. The beauty culture has rescued me from self hatred more often than poetry or philosophy; it is part of my growing up and Americanization."

This all too familiar uneasiness is associated with that part of our Judeo-Christian heritage which makes a strict distinction between the body and the soul. The religious conflict takes on a secular form in the popular belief that a concern for appearance must be directly opposed to true creative or intellectual achievement: and yet who cannot in some degree identify with this quotation from Delacroix' diary?



Standards of modesty decide not only how much flesh may be displayed, but also which bits.



"It is most extraordinary, I've done nothing all day but worry over the new coat which I tried on this morning, the one that fitted so badly. I find myself staring at every coat I pass in the street."

Criticism of fashion is often a moral criticism — disapproval of self indulgence or of the habit of judging people on standards which are literally superficial. This often arises from the belief that since clothes cover the body, they must mask the soul. And yet in fact the reverse is true, and the clothes we wear to a large extent reflect the character, not only of an individual, but of an age.

Tom Wolfe provided the most comprehensive definition: "fashion is a code, a symbolic vocabulary that offers a sub-rational but instant and very brilliant illumination of the characters of individual and even entire periods, especially periods of great turmoil".

It does this because it is an integral part (not a mere reflection) of contemporary style; and subject to the same impulses which help to mould other arts.

The origins of dress and adornment remain obscure, but surviving eyed bone needles — one of the smallest but most significant inventions in our conquest of the environment — indicate that by the Aurignacian period Palaeolithic people were already wearing clothes.

Why did this happen? There are four or five principal theories which treat protection, aesthetic expression, social status, and sexuality as motivating factors. Sexual impulses, and the concepts which have been built around them are the most relevant to us here. The simplest can be termed the 'modesty theory', probably first recorded in Genesis, chapter III:

"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons."

But what constitutes modesty varies at different times and in different societies. Whatever amount of clothing is usual in a group will seem normal to its members, and any less will be considered indecent. Standards of modesty decide not only how much flesh may be displayed, but also which bits. The Victorians, despite their predilection for a sweeping *décolletage*, would have been horrified at the amount of leg displayed by respectable matrons in the 1920s.

A further complication is introduced when we consider that dress almost unavoidably draws attention to the parts of the body it apparently seeks to hide: the half-dressed is infinitely more suggestive than the completely naked, a principle which has been taken to its logical conclusion by those tribes in which only the prostitutes wear clothes.

Modesty and immodesty are very much two sides of the same sexual coin; since the erotic drive is common to both, although it is celebrated in one and denied in the other.

Fashion is always trying to reconcile the contradictory aims of discretion and display, but the particular emphasis tends to vary with the sex of the subject.

"it goes without saying that the term [modesty] is usually applied to women. The modest woman is one who does not exploit any of the available devices for drawing attention to her sexual attractions". (James Laver, *Modesty in Dress*).

This is at least in part because her attractions have not been hers to flout. They have belonged to her husband, who guarded her sensuality as a possession of his own. Her 'allure', attractive to uncommitted men, and valued by the father who had to marry her off, was trimmed to a modest coyness once she had found a buyer. This is expressed by the proprietorial tone of Victor Hugo's letter to his fiancée.

"I wish that you feared less to have your skirts spattered with mud when you are out walking. Only yesterday I noticed with what care you took precautions, and I realize that your mother has asked you to do so, but it seems to me that modesty is more precious than a dress . . . I cannot tell you, dear one, how I suffered yesterday . . . You mustn't be seriously alarmed but it needs so little for a woman to excite the attention of men. I implore you in future, my beloved Adèle, pay attention to what I say unless you want me to strike the first insolent creature who dares to look at you."

Men have in fact long tended to project their sexual guilt onto women, and this has become institutionalized in the Judeo-Christian religions. It is Eve who, deceived by the serpent, tempts Adam into sharing the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and is punished for her sin:

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

That is to say, the reward for misplaced initiative will be repression and sexual pain.

Old Testament invective against woman, who is seen as vain and sensual, is often extremely ambivalent.

"Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet; Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord

will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets and the mufflers . . ."

(Isaiah III v.16ff. quoted Bell, Laver etc.)

Tolstoy would have agreed:

"Who indeed is the cause of sensuality . . . frivolity and all sorts of other vices in us if not women? Who causes us to lose our natural qualities of courage, resolution, reason and justice, etc., if not women?"

This long-standing tradition of invective has been echoed in a number of writings on fashion — perhaps because costume historians are often male, and tend to concentrate on female dress. At least the close association between clothes and the traditional female role has preserved an area of creativity (however undervalued), where women are considered to have played an active and even an initiating part.

In the modern sense of a developing sequence of styles, fashion is a relatively local and relatively recent phenomenon, usually agreed to have originated in the aristocratic courts of 14th century France and Burgundy, and remaining for many centuries the province of the upper classes in Western Europe. It was dependent upon the development of tailored garments as opposed to the simple and unfitted tunics of the mediaeval period; and it has been widely assumed that this was a step taken by women to enhance their seductive powers.

Rudofsky actually defines fashion as woman's way of ensnaring man, and in Laver's account

"The great discovery was that women, instead of being wrapped up like parcels, as they had been for nearly a thousand years, could, by such devices as tight lacing and décolletage do much for the enhancement of their bodily charms. These discoveries still, today, form the basis of fashion."

Such a statement implies, with irritatingly little sense of history, that women existed in a social vacuum, motivated solely by a desire to accentuate their seductive powers — and after a thousand years finally managed to work out a way of doing so.

For many centuries men too were a decorative sex; and indeed Geoffrey Squire suggests that the development of fitted clothing was inspired by the form-fitting insulation used to protect the body from chafing and bruising by metal armour; and thus by male, rather than female vanity. It is true that women's garments were more likely to restrict their movements and display their breasts, shoulders, or some other part of the body for sensual appreciation: but



For many centuries men too were a decorative sex.

A woman's attractions belonged to her husband.



apart from this, how can we assume that the attraction operated only in one direction — that the jewellery, the rich fabrics, the trimmings and the lace, the wigs and perfume, “ensnared” the man who was wearing them himself?

The problem here is that ‘Women’ and ‘Fashion’ are popularly thought of as interdependent, each subject suffering from its supposed connection with the other. Women are by nature frivolous and unpredictable — witness their exaggerated concern over the vagaries of fashion; dress is a trivial and ‘feminine’ subject, unworthy of serious consideration. This is not to say that the two subjects are *not* connected: the ideal woman of the time, matronly or childish, capable or coy, simpering or seductive, was almost literally enshrined in the clothes she wore.

Even today, women are allowed very few other ways in which to be *unequivocally* appreciated, than in the passive display of their physical charms. And so preparing to *be seen* is one of the few creative activities which has been open to them. The photographic model, with her active preparation for passivity, becomes the epitome of the ideal woman.

Since the 18th century, and arguably until relatively recently, men have been predominantly rational and practical in dress whilst women have been irrational, frivolous and decorative. Thus a social stereotype has been visually enforced, and even aggressive or manipulative women appeared fragile, frilly and charming. The clothes which most completely expressed this, such as the easily crushed delicacies and elaborate coiffeurs of Rococo fashion, also determined how women *could* behave. The Concept of Woman, and the appearance of women, reinforce each other with all the reflective power of parallel mirrors. It comes as quite a shock to experience, in contrast, the propaganda image of women in the Second World War; an image of strength and capacity rather than delicacy and grace, the embodiment of a new social role in which women might play an active part at a time of national crisis.

Different clothes affect the way we feel about ourselves, as well as the ways in which others see us. We feel uncomfortable if our dress is conveying the wrong ‘message’. It is easy to forget this because as adults, and within certain financial limits, we tend to wear the kind of clothing we find acceptable: but most of us can recall in childhood the hated stigma of regulation socks or ties or hairstyles, the parental bans on full net petticoats or platform shoes: the agony of being forced to look different from our peers, and from our own idea of ourselves.



An image of strength and capacity; women in the Second World War.

Even the most manipulative women appeared fragile, frilly and charming.



In the 20th century we may have moved away from the cruder references of period costume: our class distinctions are less clear-cut, and we do not have measured skirt lengths and sumptuary laws — but have we not really developed the seductive, the status and the expressive aspects of clothing into a more sophisticated and elusive vocabulary? Are not social guilt and ‘radical’ thinking, high style and inverted snobbery, media consciousness and group rebellion — all expressed in different kinds of clothing?

Few people have been willing and perceptive enough to analyse these phenomena. Tom Wolfe analyses US youth styles in 1973:

“The unvarying style at Yale today is best described as *Late Army Surplus* . . . more olive-green ponchos, clodhoppers and parachute boots, leaky-dye blue turtlenecks, pea jackets, ski hats, long-distance trucker warms, sheepherder’s coats, fisherman’s slickers, down-home tenant-farmer bib overalls, foal-stoker strap undershirts, fringed cowpoke jerkins, strike-hall blue work shirts, lumberjack plaids, forest ranger kackinaws, Australian bushrider mackintoshes, Cong sandals, bike leathers, more jeans, jeans, jeans, jeans, jeans, more prole gear of every description than you ever saw or read of in a hundred novels by Jack London, Jack Conroy, Maxim Gorky, Clara Weatherwax and any who came before or after.” He contrasts this with the slick gear of the local Black proletariat:

“wearing their two-tone patent Pyramids with the five-inch heels that swell out at the bottom to match the Art-Deco plaid bell-bottom baggies they have on with the three-inch-deep elephant cuffs tapering upwards toward the ‘spray-can fit’ in the seat”, and comes to the conclusion that for reasons complex and obscure,

“the sons of the slums have become the Brummels and Gentlemen of leisure, the true fashion plates of 1973, and the Sons of Eli dress like the working class of 1934 . . .”

I share this fascination for clothes and their meaning, but feel that we need to explore further if the subject is to be properly understood, particularly in its relation to women and ideal images of femininity. □

During the next few months we shall be running a series of articles on bondage, sex distinction in dress and the Dress Reform Movement, to elaborate some of the issues that have been touched on here.

NEWS

Nightcleaners Take Their Employers To Court

Last October the cleaning contract at the Ministry of Defence building in Fulham changed hands. When Home Counties Cleaning Agency took over from Clean Agents, four night cleaners were dismissed without compensation. The women decided to take their employer to the Industrial Tribunal.

Two cases were brought before the Tribunal in Victoria. Mary Kelly and Emy Lewis claimed redundancy payment, Daphne Hayes and Myrtle Wardally that they had been unfairly dismissed.

The first case was heard on January 16, when Roder of Clean Agents Ltd was ordered to pay redundancy money to Mary Kelly and Emy Lewis. After dismissing the women, Roder only offered alternative employment in Islington. As this would have meant an hour's journey by bus, the women could not accept his offer.

Three days later Daphne Hayes and Myrtle Wardally faced Roder, who alleged that their poor work warranted dismissal. The women challenged him.

At the beginning of the hearing the Tribunal decided that Ms Hayes' and Ms Wardally's cases should be heard separately as they were both complainants in their own cases and witnesses for each other — a small legal point but a large cost to the women, who were paying for legal representation.

Out of the 19th Century

In 1971 John Vickers, then president of the Civil Service Union, commented: "In all my years in the Trade Union

movement, I've never come across conditions like those in the contract cleaning business. It's like something out of the 19th century."

Everything Roder said at the hearing placed him in this context. There seemed to be fairly common agreement among the members of the Tribunal on this point. Roder didn't pay a sickness allowance, although he appeared to feel that paying the compulsory employer's contribution to the National Insurance scheme was equivalent. He didn't keep records. He didn't provide enough equipment. In addition, he sacked Daphne Hayes and Myrtle Wardally, employees of eight years standing, within a couple of days of losing his contract. He claimed to have forgotten which came first, the sacking or the news.

In arguing that Myrtle Wardally was dismissed for

poor work, Roder referred lyrically to war hero Admiral X, a resident of the Ministry of Defence building, whose ash tray had not been properly cleaned. But this appeal to class solidarity failed to soften the distaste on the Chairman's face.

Since the proceedings went on late into the afternoon, the Tribunal did not have time to hand down a decision on the case. The parties were to be notified when a decision was reached. Myrtle Wardally is still waiting for this decision.

Daphne Hayes' case was to be heard on February 11. It was cancelled at the last minute as Roder decided to settle out of court. He withdrew his argument and paid Ms Hayes redundancy money in keeping with her eight years of continuous employment.

Although the Tribunal

didn't reach a decision on the 19th, it seems likely that they would have accepted Myrtle Wardally's case. The evidence presented was very insubstantial. Roder produced scribbled notes which looked as if they might have been written five minutes before the case came up. Myrtle Wardally said she was often late for work because she visited her son who was in hospital outside London, and that Roder had agreed to this. She could not prove it.

Given so little documented evidence on which to base a decision, and a conflict of evidence as well, the sympathies of the Tribunal played an important role. And here Roder would lose, lacking the acquired sophistication of the 20th century employer.

Fair Wages — Benevolent Protection

Women cleaners have appeared before Tribunals and the Industrial Court before. The majority of cases have been attempts by the relevant unions to secure better wages for contract cleaners — Transport and General Workers Union, National Union of Public Employees, and, in particular, the Civil Service Union. Between 1968 and 1973 at least ten cases were heard in the Industrial Court, set up to hear cases relating to the Fair Wages Policy of 1946. This was benevolently designed to protect wages in small shops and badly organised industries.

Cleaners were originally employed directly by government departments, but from the fifties onwards successive governments started to employ contractors to organise the cleaning of their department offices.

A National Board of Prices and Incomes report in 1971 stated that experiments undertaken in 1959 showed that savings of up to 30% could be

Still from *Nightcleaners* by Berwick Street Film Collective: Working in the Shell Building, Central London



made by going over to contract cleaning, and that government departments were asked to review their arrangements. This was the main reason for the switch. In 1968 Callaghan, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, told the CSU that the Fair Wages Policy would prevent deterioration of the cleaners' wages, and that if this was not adhered to, cases could be brought to the Industrial Court. With the emergence of profit-making contract cleaning firms, the government's attitude to the cleaners became one of increasing indifference.

Aware of the decline in their members' wages, the CSU decided to fight. A campaign of protest got underway with a formal resolution proposed and carried at the Trades Union Congress in 1964.

Talking with Ministers

This campaign was legalistic and parliamentary. It took the form of various talks with cabinet ministers, attempts at talks with the employers' association, the Contract Cleaning and Maintenance Association, and TUC discussions as well as bringing cases before the Industrial Court.

Local activity did not attract the CSU. The NBPI report also showed that by 1971 the level of unionisation among night cleaners had dropped to 3%. There were other nightmare features to the industry — night work, low pay, fear of dismissal and discrimination, and women workers — eeks! And perhaps, after all, it seemed more attractive fighting the Chancellor of the Exchequer than talking to small groups of women in some God forsaken building in the middle of the night.

The CSU wanted to ensure that contract cleaners would be paid at the same rate as the continually declining proportion of directly employed cleaners. They wanted a general principle to cover all contract cleaners. But the way of the world, or rather their chosen way of the world, got in the way.

The Industrial Court had no powers to back up its decisions. It did not even have to give reasons for its decisions. The Civil Service Department refused to give assurances that contractors in breach of the FWP would be dismissed. The CCMA refused to hold joint discussions with the unions and the Department of Employment on the grounds that the low level of unionisation in the industry didn't merit national discussions. Meanwhile, the



Still from 'Night Cleaners': a cleaner pays her union dues

midnight life of the night cleaners continued.

All this entailed months and months of letter writing, waiting, meeting, no meeting, waiting, meeting, waiting. Eleven years later a concession was made, and the CSU formulated a fairly comprehensive agreement with the Civil Service Department. From May 1 1975 all cleaning contractors starting new contracts in government buildings had to provide at least local authority pay rates and holidays for their workers.

In Small Informal Situations

The trade unions concerned with the cleaners have been criticised by almost everyone — the night cleaners, the Cleaners Action Group, the Prices and Incomes Board, and the CCMA. The four women who took their employer to the Industrial Tribunal didn't find the CSU helpful.

The initial impulse for their action was their hatred for Roder as an employer and as a man. They found their own way to the Tribunal. They went from a legal advice centre to the DofE, filled in the relevant forms, and were ready to defend themselves. In the event, they were represented by lawyers and the costs covered by friends.

Redundancy and unfair dismissal are everyday events in small, informal work situations.

But as the CSU had focussed on the industry as a whole and specifically on the attempt to protect general wage levels, the situation of these four women was outside their self-selected area of intervention. So the union's lack of interest in the women is not inconsistent with their many appearances in the Industrial Court. In addition the CSU decided in the first week of February to unionise among the employees of large contractors only, letting the TGWU deal with the small employers.

Nevertheless the night cleaners took the results of the union's campaign home in their wage packet. Home Counties Cleaning Agency, which took over from Roder, was required by the CSD-CSU agreement to pay wages at the local authority rate. This meant a wage increase for the three women who were re-employed by the new contractor.

To the women, this reflects on their new employer — "It's a pleasure to work for him, after Roder". The employer does seem to be an improvement, he provides better equipment, pays better wages and has generally a more human face.

The two women who were not members of the CSU now wish to join a union. For them it will be the TGWU, as Home Counties Cleaning Agency is not one of the big contract cleaners.

The CSU cannot be criticised on its own terms. They did manage to increase the general level of the night cleaners' wages, and they have fought some of the initial battles with the employers' organisation.

But one problem is that most night cleaners are not aware that any struggle has been fought. Another is that the CSU doesn't appear to see this as a problem. Just as night cleaners were marginal for their erstwhile employer the government, so the CSU repeats the same relationship.

We only see this as wrong if we have a different conception of what should be. We only perceive the depths of what is wrong by contrasting what we experience — and here everything is relevant, from the spontaneous comments you overhear to the kinds of shoes a CSU official wears — with our fantasies of what we want for the future. □

Cathy Haw

Information on the CSU comes from Brian Bercusson's unpublished 'Case History of the Fair Wages Resolution in Action — The Contract Cleaners' (1975).

First Ms in Commons

Maureen Colquhoun, Labour MP for Northampton North, has asked the Sergeant at Arms and the Speaker to call her Ms.

Her first appearance as Ms in *Hansard*, the daily record of parliamentary debates, was on the Domestic Violence Bill on Friday February 13, raising points of order to the Deputy Speaker. "I don't know how this came about," she said, "as on Fridays I am in my constituency and not in the House of Commons at all."

"People are beginning to ask me how will the Speaker call you, how will he pronounce Ms. I don't know. I am sure the Speaker will find a way.

READERS' MEETING

We're holding our next readers' meeting in the *Spare Rib* office, 9 Newburgh St, London W1, at 7 o'clock on Friday April 9. Come and meet the collective and tell us what you think of the magazine; if possible, send a postcard to say you're coming. We hope women from all over will manage to get here — looking forward to seeing you,

Spare Rib Collective.

Gay Workers Conference



Proposed amendments to the Working Women's Charter dealing specifically with lesbians have come from a Gay Workers Conference in February.

70 people, of whom about 20 were women, met in Leeds for two days to discuss lesbians and work, the Working Women's Charter, the economic cuts, gays and the trade unions, a proposed Sexual Rights Charter, and gay identity at work.

What's Specific?

One workshop tried to identify what is specific for lesbians in the work situation. Women attending included a printer, lecturer, trade union worker, engineering worker and librarian. It was agreed that the workshop would be mixed, though only five men joined the discussion.

Do lesbians have a different relationship to work from heterosexual, particularly married women? Work is to do with economic independence, but gays are isolated in work situations — they can't take part in the general social atmosphere.

Was there a contradiction here, asked an NUJ member from London: you might think lesbians would be more active at work because they're more independent, less dependent on men. Yet is that potential undermined by their isolation from other women?

But these questions of consciousness were "diverted" by the Power of Women Collective, she felt, who were "undemocratic and irresponsible. At that sort of meeting, which doesn't have strong chairing, you really need to be sensitive if you've talked too much."

women's oppression.

The workshop continued with people saying they were fed up with politics. One lesbian was concerned that people should talk about their personal situations: she said she's wanted to be a nurse but it became impossible when she said she was gay. She felt the workshop should concentrate on a "common recounting of experience". Politics was jargon, and not about individuals.

Sexuality Clause Rejected

Meeting in full session, suggestions were made for changes to the Working Women's Charter, which has been in existence for two years and has been adopted by 12 unions at their national conference and 61 branches of other trade unions.

The Power of Women Collective, who propose a wage for housework, also assert that lesbianism is *de facto* a fight against capitalism. This angered lesbians at Leeds, who saw their main task as supporting and encouraging other lesbians to come out and recognise that they are oppressed.

In addition, Power of Women aim to unite lesbian and heterosexual women on the grounds that all women, whatever their sexual orientation, do housework. But this 'single cause-and-effect' argument upset many at the conference, who felt that there had to be a "multiplicity of approaches" to the question of

"While the Charter does relate the economic and social situation of women", wrote a group of lesbians from Nottingham WWC, "and recognises their dual role as the vital base from which to work, one of its

major failings is that it lacks specific references to lesbians."

A different proposal, for a separate WWC clause on sexuality in general, was rejected because people felt "we aren't ready for it yet", and so the conference formulated amendments to the existing clauses.

To clause 2, 'Equal opportunity of entry into occupations and in promotion, regardless of sex and marital status', the conference wanted to add 'sexual orientation and hours worked'. And to clause 5, 'The removal of all legal and bureaucratic impediments to equality' — which relates to tenancies, mortgages, pensions schemes etc, the addition of 'regardless of sex and sexual orientation' was proposed. These suggestions will be taken to the next national Charter conference, to be held in April.

Sexual Rights — Not Discussed
However, the Sexual Rights Charter, drawn up a few months ago in London, didn't get discussed at Leeds.

Sarah Benton from the working group feels that a lot of gays may be threatened by the SRC, which "locates gay sexuality within a general approach to sexuality. If it's going to be taken up", she adds, "it needs to be discussed by heterosexuals, because it's also concerned with the repression of female heterosexuality."

How Useful Was It?

One lesbian was disappointed that the conference "didn't discuss how feminists feel about working in mixed movements", and would have liked some of the men's fears about separatism to be explored.

She also felt that lesbians in the women's movement have given very little support to their older lesbian sisters, and tried to talk about this at Leeds. Some of the older lesbians raised the possibility of involving women in the gay clubs, but discussion of 'old style role playing' didn't get far.

Even so, she was optimistic. "I do think there's an awareness that there are questions to be asked. And we all had a good time at the disco." But she wondered how much the importance of discos at conferences reflects the social isolation of gays. □

Ann Scott

Draft Sexual Rights Charter, now being amended.

SEXUAL RIGHTS CHARTER

We believe that every person, regardless of age, or gender, or sexual orientation has the right to sexual self-determination.

For many people, this is denied by material and economic restrictions, and by a culture that oppresses, represses and exploits sexuality, especially of women and homosexuals.

We think this sexual oppression is directly related to other areas of a person's life, serving to reinforce and compound a general oppression and exploitation.

The fight against oppression generally has been held back by the failure to include sexuality as a relevant political concern. This is because sexuality has been seen both as the private concern of the individual, and as immune from conscious change.

We believe that the state as it exists can at best play only a limited role in protecting people from sexual exploitation and abuse, while the existing laws and the way in which they are enforced often further exploit those who are most oppressed.

We think that collective action against the material and cultural enforcement of sexual oppression is an essential political struggle.

We believe that the following aims are priorities in this struggle:

1. The abolition of laws relating to sexual offences, using instead the existing laws on assault, threatening or insulting behaviour. The development of the confidence and ability of those who are threatened to defend themselves and fight back.

2. The abolition of laws on censorship, obscenity and pornography. Such laws are either abused, or useless in combating real obscenity and offensive sexism.

A campaign against sexism, including insulting portrayals of women and homosexuals, in the mass media, advertising and live entertainment.

The positive portrayal of characters and relationships which are outside the normal images of sexual roles and relationships.

3. An active struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, marital status, or sex, in work, education, the law, finance and social services.

4. Sex education, both in schools and through channels that reach adults, which (a) discusses sexual responses separately from reproduction, (b) gives accurate information on contraception, abortion, reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases, (c) discusses homosexuality and other non-heterosexual forms of sexuality including masturbation as perfectly valid activities, (d) discusses how age or physical condition affects sexual activity.

5. The ending of psychological and medical classifications of homosexuality and active female sexuality as deviant, abnormal or immoral.

The ending of medical treatment and legal decisions — including those on child care and custody — which are influenced by such classifications.

6. The right to organise, publicise and assemble, without harassment in order to further the campaign for these aims. The right to public funding furtherance of these aims — for example, for gay and women's centres, battered women's homes, and rape crisis centres.

A campaign for these aims to be taken up inside the labour movement, the gay movement and the women's movement.

BATTERED WOMEN

Self Defence

Nita Greening, aged 27 and living in the Chapeltown area of Leeds, was arrested on October 29, 1975, charged with strangling her husband in a telephone box with the phone cord.

She had been beaten up for years by her husband. On this occasion they were both on their way out of the local pub when he slapped her, knocked her over and kicked her in the face. After that it is not clear exactly what happened, but Nita told a friend that she was not going home and went to call a taxi to take her to her mother's. Brian Greening followed her to the phone box, there was a struggle and he died. She tried to give him the "Kiss of Life" but failed.

Nita is now on trial on a charge of murder. Twice she was refused bail, due to the "serious nature of the charge", despite good sureties and a petition signed by over 100 neighbours and friends from the local pub expressing support for her, knowing her personally and aware of the treatment she'd had from her husband.

On January 21 the Leeds Stipendiary Magistrate refused her solicitor's request for committal to court on the lesser charge of manslaughter. Mr Lawrence, her solicitor, has said that she will be pleading "self-defence" when the

hearing comes up (no date is yet set).

This is an important case. The women in her area know what Nita Greening and her two children have been suffering and it is important to them to support a woman who at last has turned round and defended herself. Likewise, women in Women's Aid Refuges want to know what happens to a woman who retaliates to this type of violence. The police attitudes, either of non-interference or that "she must have deserved it", are known only too well.

A defence fund has been started to finance expenses, particularly of women who want to come to Leeds to support Nita at the trial. Please send donations and messages of support to: Juanita Greening Defence, c/o Harehills Housing Aid, 188 Roundhay Rd, Leeds 8. □

Jill Campbell

Talking it out

Tory MP Rees-Davies sabotaged Jo Richardson's Domestic Violence Bill for the third time on February 27.

When this Bill to improve the legal position of battered women came up for its second reading on February 13, it was "talked out" by Rees-Davies. Debates on private members' bills have to finish at 4pm, when the vote is taken. If an

MP is still speaking, the vote can't be taken and the bill goes to the back of the queue.

Arthur Davidson, last Labour speaker for the Bill, sat down hurriedly at what he was told was 4 o'clock. The Speaker had stood up to start the vote when Rees-Davies jumped to his feet with a point of order. The Speaker let him in and the Bill fell, to shouts of fury from Audrey Wise on the floor and 50 women in the gallery.

On the Nod

On February 20 the Bill was "on the nod" — a quaint Parliamentary custom where the name of the Bill is read out and if anyone shouts "Object!" it falls. Rees-Davies objected, and again on February 27. Jo Richardson was then in bed with pleurisy, so Ian Mikardo read the Bill and proceeded to object to every Tory private member's bill.

Perhaps now Tories will put pressure on Rees-Davies to stop. He may try again on March 5, but once Jo Richardson is well, the government has promised to make special time for her Bill.

So it should finally get through its second reading and into Standing Committee, where details are tidied up. At

that stage the National Women's Aid Federation hopes to insert a clause on cohabitants.

Rees-Davies wants a Select Committee on the Bill — this would contemplate the general principle for months (like the Select Committee on abortion). Jo Richardson said, "It's not that he's *against* laws improving things for women — he just wants them to wait for a couple of hundred years".

At least the weeks of waiting for this reform have brought good publicity for women's aid. □

Jill Nicholls

Deciding OUR fate....

On February 13, the day he delayed the battered women's bill, Rees-Davies also held forth on rape:

"It would be wholly wrong if men were found guilty of it when they did not have a guilty mind.

"Take the case of a British Army sergeant who got drunk in the sergeants' mess and ended up raping the wife of the corporal living next door, under the impression that it was his own wife." □

James White MP (famous for his anti-abortion bill) remarked recently that his female constituents "didn't seem to mind the odd whack around the ear on a Saturday night". SOCIALIST WORKER

'Amazons or Delicate Flowers?'

Despite a Home Office announcement that fire brigades would not be exempt from the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act, East Sussex county council's Public Protection Committee has decided that women should not be recruited for fire-fighting work.

Councillor Roger Roger-Jones said: "Who could think of a fire being faced with having to send women into the heart of a fire? Yet if firewomen are taken on, he might have to do that."

Other Committee members raised the problem of women fire officers having to carry heavyweight men down an escape ladder.

Even the councillors who supported women produced archaic imagery. Councillor David Williams, for example, felt that while some women

were "delicate flowers", others were Amazons and might want to apply for jobs as firewomen.

But Councillor Peter Jackson thought that "Most women don't want Sir Walter Raleigh and the cloak any more. If they meet the criteria they should be accepted, without a lot of this old-fashioned talk."

The Policy and Resources Committee will now be asked to ask the Association of County Councils to urge the Government to exempt the fire service from some of the Act's provisions.

Too Much Stress?

Although women are involved in many aspects of fire brigade work, male colleagues have claimed they are "unsuitable to bear the physical and mental stress of fire-fighting".

The inclusion of women would also mean expensive

new buildings for lavatory and sleeping facilities, it was reported.

And Eric Whitaker, fire brigade administrator for East Sussex, likes "having women, but in the right sort of job. As far as the operational side is concerned, the majority of women could not even be considered. Even in Russia they do not allow women to do it." □

The Sting

About 100 women workers at British Leyland (Ward End) are reported to be refusing to have their 19 minutes extra rest time each shift taken away from them as a penalty for receiving equal pay.

"Perhaps the men should claim extra rest periods too", say women in Birmingham, "instead of the women losing a hard-won fight." □

Birmingham Women's Paper

Still Picketing

400 women on strike for equal pay at the GEC factory in Treforest, South Wales, held a mass meeting on February 27, after four weeks out, and rejected an offered £2.50 increase. They'll carry on picketing the factory till they get a £3.45 increase, which will bring their rate up to that of a second grade, semi-skilled man.

They want the principle established that they are semi-skilled, not unskilled, workers. Their training takes 13 weeks, and they work on electronic and telecommunication equipment that often requires fine measurements.

They've been picketing in shifts, with teams collecting rubbish and wood to keep a warming bonfire alight. □

Changing their tune

Porters and hospital drivers in the South Birmingham Hospital District refused to handle dirty linen from hospitals in their district as part of their support action for the 21 part-time women cleaners at Mosley Hall Hospital.

The 21 were refusing to do extra work because the Area Health Authority couldn't "afford" to employ enough staff. The dispute was settled within 24 hours of the porters and drivers giving their support. The hospital authorities decided that they could afford to employ enough cleaners after all. □

Brum Women's Paper



DAVE EVANS (IFL)

Women Against the Cuts

4,000 people marched through Birmingham on February 21 to protest against cuts in public spending. Crowds of women, especially from NUPE and NALGO, went on the demonstration, which was called by the Regional TUC. At the formal meeting afterwards little was said about how the cuts affect women.

The Working Women's Charter Campaign held a conference in London on February 28 to try to work that out. Unfortunately it didn't get very far: men and women from left groups put their lines on the crisis and the best way to "lead" women forward; one group was particularly disruptive and so the atmosphere made it hard for women not in political organisations to contribute. I felt many of the speakers were patronising about women: "We must convince the working class to recognise women, who are weak and oppressed and isolated in the home." Some seemed to think that joining a trade union automatically ended isolation. The main argument for nurseries was that they would give women time to do *real* work and join unions, with no discussion of why many women already in waged work are not unionised.

The emphasis was on women *working* in the public sector, whose jobs are threatened by the cuts, not on women as consumers of the social services — which would have included all of us. Women — and "the working class as a whole" — were referred to as *them*, an object *we* had to organise.

The concentration on established institutions — unions, trades councils, hospitals — meant that other projects affected by the cuts were ignored, for instance women's refuges applying for urban aid.

However, information was exchanged about specific cuts, and the 250 present passed a series of proposals for future action, including calling another conference on Women, the Cuts and Unemployment. □

Jill Nicholls



"People are like elastic: the more work they have to do, the more they stretch" — Sir Arnold Weinstock, managing director of GEC. SOCIALIST WORKER

Details of the next conference from WWCC, 49 Lowther Hill, London SE23. Copies of the amended resolutions from Michele Ryan, 39 Parkholme Rd, London E8.

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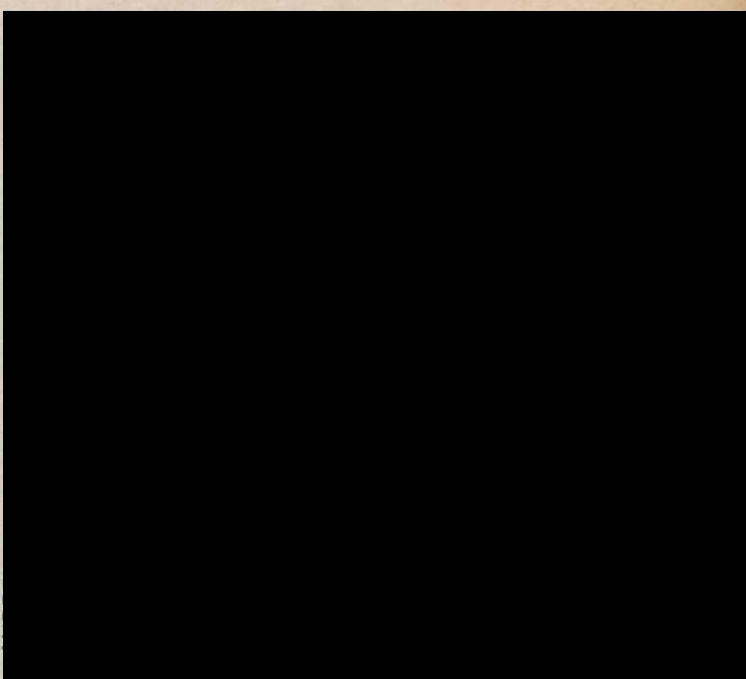
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The TUC held a conference on the Sex Discrimination Act in London on February 19. June Fisher (above) from the National Union of Teachers felt discrimination had to be tackled early, in the home and in schools. "The Equal Opportunities Commission doesn't go far enough." □

Hospital in a Panic

The staff and patients of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital in London's Euston Road are continuing their campaign in spite of Barbara Castle's announcement on February 12 that the hospital would be closed and the facilities moved elsewhere.

Named after Britain's first woman doctor, the hospital was opened in 1890 to provide treatment for women by women doctors. It has 107

beds and a maternity unit, and provides treatment in all the major specialties, seeing over 4,000 new outpatients a year.

Since the hospital's future first came into question in September 1974, an Action Committee comprising representatives of doctors, nurses, administrators, ancillary staff and patients has stressed women's right to choose treatment by women. Only 8% of NHS consultants are women and so the choice is rarely possible.

Not Just Stone by Stone
The hospital has been deliber-



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

Subjects of the Shah

At the U.N. International Women's Year Conference, the Shah of Iran's regime was represented by his sister, Princess Ashraf. The Shah recently ordered Iranian women to celebrate International Women's Day not on March 8, like the rest of us, but on February 27, the day he granted them the vote.

Whether this enfranchisement means that Iranian women have now gained full freedom and the ability to participate in political life, as Princess Ashraf claimed in Mexico City, can best be judged by a look at the particular style of democracy in Iran. The two parties (known to Iranians as the 'yes, sir' party and the 'of course, sir' party) have now been dissolved into the new Resurrection Party, subscription to which is obligatory. Any attempt at defiance or political expression through other channels meets with arrest and imprisonment or torture at the hands of SAVAK, the political police. Amnesty International estimates the number of political prisoners at 45,000. Some



4,000 of these are women.

Women are not noticeably benefitting from Iran's massive oil revenues — average female wage in industry is 30 rials (20p) a day, half to a third of the male pittance. Some 30,000 women weave carpets by hand for 10-15p a day, and the 60% of women who work in the agricultural sector earn about 20p a day.

On the cultural front, 80% of women are illiterate — in the countryside, percentages are higher. In law, fundamental inequalities exist between men and women. The man is very definitely the patriarch in the family — he can marry more than one wife, and his testimony in any dispute holds twice as much weight as the woman's. A wife cannot travel without her husband's permission.

Talking to Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci (*New Republic*, Dec. 73) the Shah pronounced, "In a man's life women only count if they are beautiful and graceful and know how to be feminine. This women's lib business for instance! What do these feminists want? Equality you say, indeed! I do not want to sound rude but you may be equal in the eyes of the law [sic] but not — I beg your pardon for saying so — in ability". □

From a statement by the Iranian Students' Society in G.B.



ately run down over the last few years to make it easier for Castle to justify closure, the



Action Committee say. But things suddenly got worse at the beginning of March, reports its chairperson Pippa Pearson, who is angry but anxious.

"There's only one lift working this week, so two wards have been closed since February 27 because they're too far up. We're so confused about everything that's going on. I don't know who's got the decision on the lift."

Now Camden and Islington Area Health Authority have decided there are structural faults in the balconies. "If they're very bad then the fire escapes could be closed, and we'd close tomorrow."

Doctors, outpatients and maternity were carrying on but theatre had been cancelled and only four wards were open. "The hospital is in a panic," Ms Pearson said. It seemed significant to her that this was happening "once Barbara Castle has decided she wants to sell the site."

"It's not just stone by stone," she added. "The hospital is being ripped apart while we're standing watching. There's men chipping away all over the place. I can't tell you how bad it is."

DHSS Amoral?

Patients want to ensure that when the move takes place, all the facilities and staff are moved, and that women can still be treated in all major specialties by women.

So the Action Committee is demanding that the 'new EGA' have its own administration, to guarantee continuation of the service. The EGA is a national hospital, funded locally, and Ms Castle has rejected suggestions of central or regional funding.

Until funds are more broadly based the hospital's national role will be at risk, the Committee says. At present 75% of patients come from outside the health area.

The Committee also thinks it amoral for the DHSS to sell off the EGA site and buildings, which were paid for by women's organisations. Any sale profits should be spent on the 'new EGA' or to benefit women in medicine or women patients.

But Area Nursing Officer Trevor Clay was somewhat suave about the work being done on the hospital's balconies. "We're looking at ways and means of getting the work done and keeping as much of the hospital open as possible," he said on March 3.

"The difficulty for our staff is that this blow has come on top of the Secretary of State's decision — and it is a blow." □

Ann Scott

NEW YORK OFFICE
WORKERS is held over to next month to make room for local news.

SHORTLIST

events

Events are listed chronologically.

Woman Help Yourself

A weekend of workshops and films on alternative health, our self-image, childbearing, sexuality, etc., organised by Greenwich Women's Liberation Group. Kidbrooke House, Mycenae Rd, London SE3, on March 19-21. Creche provided. Contact Rosie (01-854 8636).

South West Region Conference

On March 20 at Friends Meeting House, 126 Hampton Rd, Redland, Bristol 6, from 10am to 5pm. Creche and accommodation available. Topics include: the new legislation, sexist ads, our bodies, part-time work, childcare facilities. Tell Bristol Women's Group if you are going. 59 Lower Union St, Bristol BS1 2DU (0272-22760).

Scottish Women's Liberation

The Scottish Workshop are holding their conference on March 20/21 at the Students Union, St. Andrews. Please register in advance so that they can estimate how much food and accommodation is needed. Also let them know if you are bringing kids (creche rota). Registration fee is £2 or £1 for claimants. Cheques to Scottish Women's Liberation Workshop, sent to 4 Fleming Place, St. Andrews, Fife (St. Andrews 5705).

New Legislation

Hounslow Women's Action Group is organising a day school on the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts, to be held at the Labour Club, 20 Heath Rd, Hounslow, Middlesex, on March 21 from 11am to 4pm. There will be a creche.

The Pill

The pill on or off prescription is the theme of a conference organised for March 23 at the Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Ave, London WC2. Contact Jean Robinson at The Patients Association, 335 Gray's Inn Rd, London WC1 (01-837 7241) for further information.

Gay Switchboard Party

In its two years of operation Gay Switchboard has handled over 80,000 telephone enquiries from gay people. Their fund-raising party is at Hammersmith Town Hall on March 26 from 8pm to 1am. Tom Robinson's Late Night Extra will be playing and tickets are £1.50 on the door and £1.25 in advance. Phone Gay Switchboard day or night (01-837 7324).

Women in Ads

Women in Media workshop on advertising at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 on March 27 from 10am to 5pm. Morning session: questions and answers involving various women in the advertising business. After-

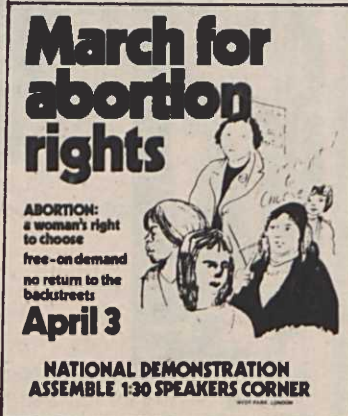
noon session: make your own acceptable ads, with the help of video equipment. More info from Elisabeth Millar (01-328 7690 evenings).

Women Alone

This symposium on the difficulties faced by gay parents (the law, housing and the social services) is organised by Action for Lesbian Parents for March 27 at the University of London Students Union, Malet St, London WC1. The registration fee is £1 per session or £1.50 for both sessions. Forms from ALP, 57 Maids Causeway, Cambridge CB5 8DE.

Abortion Demonstration

Demonstrate against all parliamentary moves to restrict women's access to safe, legal abortion. In



March for abortion rights

ABORTION: a woman's right to choose
free-on-demand
no return to the backstreets

April 3

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION ASSEMBLY 1-30 SPEAKERS CORNER

London on April 3. Details from National Abortion Campaign, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1 (01-485 4303).

Northern Region Women's Aid

A regional conference is being planned for April 3 in Doncaster. Information from Janey Newton-Moss, The House, The Village, Strensall, N. Yorks, or from Women's Aid, 51 Chalcot Rd, London NW1 (01-586 0104).

National Women's Aid

The next national conference will be held in York on April 10/11. There will be a creche and live entertainment in the evening. Information from Janey Newton-Moss as above.

Working Women's Charter

National conference on April 10/11 in Coventry. Open to all supporting groups, which may send two delegates. The themes are perspectives and strategy, amendments to the charter and structure of the campaign. Application forms from WWCC, 49 Lowther Hill, London SE23 1PZ (01-690 5518).

National Conference

The next national Women's Liberation conference will be in Newcastle on April 23-25. Main theme for discussion is the *future of the women's movement*. If you want to write a paper, put up a display or have any suggestions contact Newcastle Women's Liberation Group, 46 Simonside

Please send information to Anny Brackx, Shortlist, Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS.

Terrace, Newcastle 6 or ring Rosie (0632-812 266). Covering costs necessitates advance registration (£3.50, possibly less; this includes accommodation but not food). Send for an application form with s.a.e.

Patriarchy Conference

Weekend conference to be held in London in May. Its aim is to explore the theory and methodology in current use in the women's movement. Referring to both psychoanalysis and marxism, the term patriarchy needs clarifying. Anyone interested in planning the conference write to Sue Himmelweit, Room 511, Birkbeck College, Gresse St, London W1 or ring Elisabeth Cowie (01-734 5455 daytime).

N.B.

Sell Spare Rib at your conference. Phone the office (01-437 2070) to order your copies.

centres

Lancaster

The women's centre is in the process of being set up. It will soon be open on Saturdays for information, coffee and a chat. Plough Hotel, Moor Lane, Lancaster.

Waltham Forest

Waltham Forest Women's Action Group has opened a community centre with plenty of meeting



From Brum Women's Paper

rooms. At the moment there is a small bookshop, an information centre, and a mums and toddlers club. Phone if you know a craft and are willing to teach it. People can drop in on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and most evenings except weekends. Check before you go: Wendy (01-520 1803), Sue (01-539 7643), or

Anne (01-505 2237). 161 Markhouse Rd, London E17.

Oakland's, Wales

This "is a new residential centre in rural Wales open to any woman or child for up to two weeks. We have room for up to 15 women at a time. Up to now most women have come for holidays. We hope consciousness-raising groups and working collectives will also book the centre. Live and cook communally at £1 a day (50p for children), bring sleeping bags and please book." By phone (049-74 275) or letter to Oakland's Women's Centre, Glasbury-on-Wye, via Hereford, Powys, Wales.

Merseyside

They need money to keep the centre going as well as tools and equipment to do it up. The centre is open from 10am to 4pm. Women and children are welcome. There are open meetings on Wednesday evenings at 8pm. Women's Centre, 49 Seel St, Liverpool 1 (051-709 4141).

projects

Women and Squatting

Regular London meetings are planned for women squatters or sisters wanting to squat, to exchange information on skills and to give each other support. Information from Sarah (01-720 7432), Janet (01-226 9936), or South London Women's Centre (01-622 8432).

North London Women's Bop

There is now a regular women's disco on Saturday evenings 8.30pm at the Hemmingford Arms, Offord Rd, London N1. No children allowed. 15p admission, 10p for claimants.

Save Wilton Music Hall

Wilton Music Hall, Graces Alley, London E1, could become the new home of the Half Moon Theatre, if they can get it together to renovate this huge building within the council's stipulated 6 months. £55,000, help and suggestions are needed. This could become one of the biggest community projects in the East End of London. Further information from the Half Moon Theatre, 27 Alie St, London E1 (01-480 6465).

Women's Cinema

This collectively run group is screening political and feminist films on a fortnightly basis. *Salt of the Earth*, *Women of the Rhonda* and *Women of Toubou* will be shown on March 31. *Ramparts of Clay* and *Women in Prison* on April 14. *The conformist* on April 28. London International Film School, Shelton St, London WC2 at 8pm. Membership £1 per year and 50p entrance.

plays

RAT Theatre

"A theatre wherein all communi-

cation relies on the body; a theatre of movement; a theatre of sound but no words. There is not even music to hide behind, nor any sets." *Fifty/50*, their latest show, explores the conflicts and tensions of a woman exposed to the realities of the world. It will be shown on April 3 at the ICA, The Mall, London. RAT theatre can be contacted at 4 Wedgwood St, Red St, Chesterton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs ST5 7AQ (0782-564677).

The General Will

A group of women from Bradford are touring England with their show *I just don't like apples*. It deals with a range of issues from battered wives to equal pay. They are performing at Loughton College, Essex on March 29; in Islington on April 10; at the National Women's Conference in Newcastle on April 24 and in Hull on April 30.

pamphlets

Oil Causes Cancer

About ten million workers are exposed to the health hazards of mineral oil: skin cancer, dermatitis, pneumonia, stomach and lung cancer. HM Factory Inspectorate reported "one auto shop with at least 16 cases of cancer of the scrotum as well as skin lesions out of a workforce of 85". One-third of the engineering labour force are women but statistics for vulval cancer, caused by exposure to oil, are non-existent, despite evidence since 1946.

This pamphlet is designed as a workers' guide. It provides practical information on the various oil diseases and has sections on prevention and protection. It urges workers to organise on the shopfloor for health and safety at work as the only way to shake the government into action. It also gives advice on how to check the level of oilmist, who to complain to and how to prevent it, reminding us that in industry production comes before health.



Oil, a workers' guide to the health hazards and how to fight them, is available from the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, 9 Poland St, London W1V 3DG at 75p + 20p postage.

Abortion

The Birth Control Trust has compiled some of the evidence given

last year to the Select Committee on James White's restrictive Abortion (Amendment) Bill. Concentrating on the major medical bodies and government agencies, it demonstrates wide-ranging support for the recommendations of the Lane Committee on Abortion, set up to investigate the workings of the 1967 Abortion Act. It also indicates the main areas of controversy: control of the private sector, foreign women, difficulties of law enforcement, and upper time limit for carrying out an abortion.

The Birth Control Trust is an independent charity, campaigning as a parliamentary pressure group for better birth control facilities. The extracts cost 50p, from 23-25 Mortimer St, London W1A 4QW (01-580 9360).

Understanding Our Bodies

Bolton Women's Liberation Group has produced the medical section of a local women's guide. The booklet concentrates on pregnancy and childbirth, contraception, abortion, subfertility, having your child adopted, but also has small sections on the menopause, VD and self-help. It gives a thorough run-down of what we have to know in order to survive the rigmarole of medical procedure and administration. The language is clear and medical terms are explained rather than avoided.

"If there is anything you do not understand or any information you want; always ask - it's your body that's being examined." The booklet gives out a feeling of 'we all need help at one time or another' and inspires confidence. One disappointment though: why treat women's complaints as a heterosexual preserve? Lesbians do need support against the humiliating treatment of the medical and psychiatric professions.

Bolton Women's Guide, Part 1 Medical, can be obtained from Bolton Women's Liberation Group, c/o 52 Yewdale Gardens, Brightnet, Bolton, Lancs.

journals & articles

Girls and Subcultures

'Girls and Subcultures' traces the shift from total invisibility of girls in the youth subcultures of the fifties to their relative visibility in the seventies. Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber of Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies locate the underlying continuity in girls' domestic expectations and subordinate social role while exploring differences between the Teddy Boy, Mod, Motorbike, Hippie and Teeny Bopper subcultures with insight and great care.

A bridge between the two post-war periods was formed by the emergence of a 'softer' working-class subculture in the mid-sixties (Mod) in which girls participated directly, and of a middle class subculture (Hippie) in the



late sixties; the growth of Unisex styles; and the rise of the deliberately 'feminine', camp, or bi- and trans-sexual singer. But "the feminising of the male image", they suggest, "may in no way signal the complementary liberation of the female from the constraints of the feminine image".

The "purely sexual" presence of the motorbike girl has obscured the fact that "few girls penetrated to the symbolic core of the subculture - the motorbike itself, a technical knowledge of the machines, their limitations and capacities". But in reviewing obsession and fantasy in Teeny Bopper culture the paper concludes wryly that girl culture is so well insulated as to exclude boys, adults, teachers and researchers.

'Resistance Through Rituals' (*Working Papers in Cultural Studies* 7 & 8), £1.50 from CCCS, University of Birmingham, PO Box 363; Birmingham B15 2TT, investigates the relation between subculture and class culture via drug use, doing nothing, reggae, communes and theoretical diagrams.

Ann Scott

Feminern Press

A Japanese feminist publisher has translated articles on women in Asia into English. Editor Takagi Sawako says that American and European feminists "have the obligation to become informed about and support the actions of women in Asia, and particularly in underdeveloped countries", if we are to stop contributing to their exploitation.

The articles deal with women and the Chinese revolution; Ting Ling, a revolutionary and feminist purged from the Chinese Communist Party; what it means to be a woman in Japan; and the sexual exploitation of Korean women through government-supported

prostitution.

Write to Feminern Press, Box 5426 Tokyo International, Japan. **Not For Lesbians Only** "It is not okay, and I do not want it ever to be okay, to be queer in patriarchy", concluded Charlotte Bunch of *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly* at last year's socialist feminist conference in Ohio, USA.

Acknowledging that she doesn't want to be a total separatist again, she says in *Quest's* reprint that it's not lesbianism (women's ties to women) but heterosexuality (women's ties to men) which divides women politically and personally. Heterosexuality is the basis of female oppression: "When we look at how women are defined and exploited as secondary, marginal workers, we recognise that this definition assumes that all women are tied to men."

The argument is occasionally universalistic ("Heterosexual women must realise that the benefits they receive from men will always be in diluted form and will ultimately result in their own self-destruction"), but always alive ("Since lesbians are materially oppressed by heterosexuality daily, it is not surprising that we have seen and understood its impact first - not because we are more moral, but because our reality is different").

Charlotte has effectively shown that "lesbian feminism is not a political analysis for lesbians only", but the formal presentation in the magazine gives no hint of the response to the original speech. Did the socialist feminists snarl when she reminded them that "token reference to queers" wasn't enough? Or was there excitement and tension?

Quest Vol II No 2, Fall 1975. Single issues \$2.35 and subscription details from PO Box 8843, Washington DC, 20003.

Ann Scott

NAC BOYCOTT

NAC is refusing to give evidence to the Select Committee. Instead it called a press conference on March 1, the day its evidence was due, to explain why.

The Select Committee now consists of eight MPs, excluding the chairperson, all anti-abortion. Six sympathetic MPs, who opposed the recalling of the committee, resigned on February 16. NAC is urging other MPs not to take their places.

Technically the committee can carry on regardless — it needs a quorum of only three — but it's now obviously biased, and its legitimacy is doubtful as it is outside its own terms of reference, which were to "consider the matters contained in the Abortion (Amendment) Bill". As a private member's bill, that was automatically dropped at the end of the last session.

Evidence ignored

NAC stated, "We believe that it will serve no purpose to talk to MPs who are already poised to restrict the existing abortion legislation. They have ignored the main bulk of evidence already presented, the majority of which was totally against the provisions of James White's Bill."

They have ignored the BMA, the Home Office, the DHSS, MIND and many other organisations that support the 1967 Act, as well as all the organisations that support abortion "on request" — the TUC, the Women's TUC, the Labour Party executive, the Labour Party conference. And they have ignored evidence already sent in by local NAC groups.

So NAC has decided to ignore *them*, not in order to keep its evidence secret, but to find other ways of making it public: through the media, through women in the streets, possibly through a public focus or tribunal to which pro-abortion evidence can be submitted.

Asked at the press conference about the chances of NAC being subpoenaed and forced to give evidence, Angela Phillips replied, "Let them do so on April 3 when thousands of women will be marching through London. They should subpoena the whole of the National Abortion Campaign. Then they should come to Trafalgar Square, where we shall be ending our demonstration, and hear there the evidence we have for them." □

How late?

The Abortion Law Reform Association wants to decriminalise abortion and work on future positive legislation for "a woman's right to choose". Their proposals are:

1. Repeal of the 1861 Offences Against the Persons Act, Clauses 58 and 59, which make abortion a criminal offence.
2. Repeal of the 1967 Abortion Act, which restricts the availability of abortion.
3. Retention of the 1929 Infant Life Preservation Act, which defined infant life as beginning at 28 weeks, but lowering the time limit for abortions to 24 weeks.
4. Placing a duty on the Secretary of State to provide facilities for abortion on the NHS.

Basically the proposals just stop abortion being a crime and ensure that abortion facilities are actually provided. The most contentious suggestion is that an upper time limit be set — should a woman have the right to choose to abort up to eight months 29 days? or is abortion after six months un-

acceptable because the foetus is capable of independent existence? If induced prematurely and born live, a baby risks brain damage and respiratory problems. □



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

1. Lobbying Parliament on the afternoon of February 9 while MPs debated abortion.

45 Seat Coaches

Since the national conference last October, which many activists found demoralising, local work has been picking up again. NAC groups are fighting for better abortion facilities in their areas, picketing SPUC meetings, contacting union branches, talking to women in shopping centres and workplaces:

Birmingham

Only 23% of abortions in the area are done on the NHS. NAC is building up a pressure group on this, through unions, hospitals, Community Health Councils and a petition that they plan to present to the Area Health Authority. (Contact 021-233 2563).

West London

The NAC group has visited all the CHCs in the area to encourage them to cooperate in finding out what local facilities are — also how many abortions are done and what methods are used. They'll write this up in a bulletin, with advice on how to get an abortion locally, and sell it outside supermarkets and schools.

They'd heard that an outpatient clinic was going to open at the New Charing Cross Hospital. "But after getting more details from the CHC, we

realised it would probably be giving only a very limited service because of opposition from one consultant. So now we're organising a big campaign to put pressure on the hospital authorities to give us the sort of facilities women in our area need."

They see this as linked with supporting the campaign against private practice at the Hammersmith Hospital and resisting the closure of Acton Hospital. (Contact 01-351 1055).

Pontefract

In February the group decided to hire a 45 seat coach to get to the demonstration in London on April 3. To advertise this, they're petitioning door-to-door and they've booked the Angling Club for a public meeting in March. (Contact Pontefract 73753).□

3. Anna Raeburn chaired the songs and the speeches. As a Labour councillor, Ann Ward (*above*) is used to public speaking, but she'd never before dared speak openly about her experience of backstreet abortion before the 1967 Act was passed. The audience listened, appalled.



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

4. At 10pm Parliament voted: 313 for reconvening the Select Committee, only 172 against. NAC supporters marched furiously across the square to the House of Commons, then disbanded, depressed but determined to go on fighting.

Best form of birth control?

The safest form of contraception for all women is the diaphragm or condom, with an abortion as back-up in case of failure, according to a report published on February 15 by Dr Christopher Tietze of the Population Council in New York.

The pill for women over 25 is reckoned to be twice as

dangerous as relying totally on an early abortion as a method of contraception.

NAC commented, "The report could be valuable by pointing out that abortion is safe and simple, and by demystifying abortion to the point where the mass of women are able to accept it."□

BPAS Daycare

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service, a charity, has been given permission by the DHSS to do daycare abortions — the first outside the NHS in Britain.

Women less than 12 weeks pregnant, planning to spend the night less than 50 miles or two hours travel from the clinic, no longer have to stay overnight in the nursing home. Patients can now be discharged three hours after the operation, though they may choose to stay longer.

BPAS will still use general anaesthesia unless the woman insists on local. Their research shows that given a choice "without strings", 97.1% of their patients prefer a general anaesthetic.

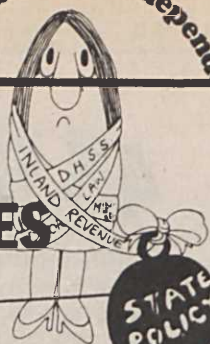
The cost stays the same £66 — on the grounds that there should be no financial differential between early and late abortions. But BPAS hopes to be able to reduce costs across the board if women start to use BPAS instead of commercial abortion clinics (over 20,000 British women

went to commercial clinics last year). Unfortunately they can make their services more widely known only by increased advertising, which would mean higher prices now.

BPAS aims explicitly to "point the way" for the NHS, not to act as a substitute. At present there are only six NHS outpatient abortion clinics in Britain, though many doctors would like to see more. An early abortion by vacuum extraction is the safest method, and takes only a few minutes.□

"Women who demand unduly prolonged fore-pleasure as a precondition to the sexual act of penetration are to be avoided. Their demands are motivated by an attempt to disparage, as pleasure-giving, the male organ itself." — says Leo Abse MP, sponsor of James White's bill and still on the Select Committee.

The Demand for Independence



NEW CON FOR ONE PARENT FAMILIES



Dear Madam
A NEW BENEFIT FOR ONE-PARENT FAMILIES
You will probably have heard that Parliament has approved a new benefit, called Child Interim Benefit, to be paid to one-parent families from 5 April 1976 at the same rate as Family Allowance ie £1.50 a week. The new benefit will run for one year only until April 1977 when the general Child Benefit Scheme, which replaces Family Allowances, will start.

I must explain that Parliament has also decided that the new benefit should be treated in the same way as Family Allowance when your supplementary benefit is worked out. So it will have to be taken fully into account. This means that if you claim and are awarded the new benefit, your supplement will have to be reduced by £1.50.

You will see that it is only if your supplementary benefit will be less than £1.50 from April 1976 that you could be better off by taking the new benefit and giving up supplementary benefit. Even so if you have been receiving supplementary benefit for nearly two years if may be to your advantage to delay your claim for CHIB until then. This is because you could qualify for a higher rate of supplementary benefit after two years.

The decision whether to claim the new benefit is entirely for you. Your supplementary benefit will not be reduced unless you claim and are awarded the new benefit. If you are not sure whether it would be to your advantage to claim please do not hesitate to ask for advice from this office.

Yours faithfully
Manager

Both the Tories and the present Labour government have accepted in principle that child allowances in the tax system, the national insurance system, family allowance and family income supplement (FIS) ought to be replaced by a single tax-free cash benefit. The new benefit, paid for every child including the first, would normally be paid to the mother just like family allowances are now. This would improve on the present system because it would make sure that the mother would get money for the children paid directly to her. She would be less dependent on the father, whether or not she was married to him, to hand over money for his children's keep. The present child tax allowances enormously reduce the amount of tax fathers pay — they are worth four or five times a family allowance; and so the new child benefit would, in effect, represent a substantial transfer of cash from father, who would pay more tax, to mother who would collect more from the post office. This transfer worries many men and the government are only prepared to introduce it slowly, not just for financial reasons, but because they are afraid of losing men's votes.

WHO BENEFITS?

The first phase is to give a

new benefit to one-parent families starting from April this year. As it is only worth £1.50 it is too small to replace any of the allowances being paid for children at the moment — hence the name child INTERIM benefit (CHIB). If you are struggling to bring up a child on supplementary benefit you will probably have received this leaflet which describes CHIB. If after reading this description of the choice the DHSS is offering, you conclude that it is a choice not worth having, you would be absolutely right. It is a grim example of how the government gives with one hand and takes not just some, but ALL back with the other. Half of all one-parent families rely on supplementary benefit and in 1974 none were getting less than £1.50. In other words it is not worth half, the poorer half of one-parent families, claiming CHIB.

Who then will be better off by claiming CHIB? Perhaps those claiming FIS. After all they are supposed to be the poorest families with a parent in full-time employment. However if you claim CHIB while on FIS, it will be counted as income and you will lose 75p a week FIS next time they review it. So at the very most while on FIS you could receive 75p CHIB extra a week.

But worse is to come. The government starts taxing people when they are earning less than the minimum income the DHSS think it is necessary to live on. A single parent with one young child is allowed to earn together with any maintenance received, about £26 a week before she (or he) starts paying income tax: the FIS 'prescribed amount' is £31.50.

Although FIS itself is not taxable, CHIB is; so a single parent already paying income tax at the basic rate will lose 52p (35%) of the £1.50. In addition CHIB is treated like family allowances in the tax system and is subject to 'clawback'. This device was introduced in 1968 when family allowances were increased by 50p. In order to concentrate the increase on the poorest families, any parent paying income tax had their tax threshold adjusted so that nearly all the increase was paid back in extra tax. So, on top of the 52p ordinary income tax, another 35p will be deducted in tax, leaving just over 60p a week extra for the first child. This is LESS than the 75p lost in FIS! At least the leaflet sent to all receiving FIS admits "it will not normally benefit a FIS payee who regularly pays income tax to claim the new benefit".

Those earning too much to qualify for FIS will almost certainly be paying income tax and if they claim CHIB, tax plus clawback will leave them only about 60p better off. Altogether even the government estimates that only 250,000, less than a quarter of children in one-parent families, will claim the new benefit and notices no-one will be better off by the full £1.50.

There are further restrictions. The widow, divorced or legally separated mother will get CHIB when she applies for it. The separated mother (or father) will have to wait until she can prove she has been separated for at least 13 weeks. And of course the cohabitation rule applies to this benefit, until April 1977, when two parent families will have the dubious pleasure of claiming CHIB.

This "benefit" must be one of the most worthless any government has introduced, and makes a mockery of their professed concern about the difficulties facing those on their own with children. □

Hilary Land
Financial & Legal
Independence Campaign

RECORDS, BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS

ROUGH TRADE, incredibly cheap records (eg Dylan — Desire £2.55), new and secondhand, and beautiful handmade craft and leather. We will buy your old records and furnish you with gifts. 202 Kensington Park Road, London W11 just off Portobello Road), phone 01-727 4312.

FOR GAY WOMEN: "THE GIRLS' GUIDE—1976" pocket size international bar guide and complete directory. 40 countries/2000 listings. £2.00 at Sterling's Bookstore, 57 St Martin's Lane, WC2 and Symposium Bookshop, 12 Market St, Brighton

RIISING FREE left-wing bookshop 197 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1 Large selection of radical women's literature with mail order service. Including: VD HANDBOOK 8p, PAMPHLET OF THE FIRST WOMEN AND HEALTH CONFERENCE SHEFFIELD 15p. CIRCLE ONE, a woman's guide to self-health and sexuality 80p.

RESEARCH MATERIAL ON WOMAN AND SOCIETY. Enquire for specialist catalogues. TARA BOOKS LTD, Shortacre Park Rd, Winchester, Hants. Winchester 2239.

Nuclear weapons still threaten everyone — keep in touch with latest developments by reading CND's newspaper SANITY. 10p a copy or £1 a year. Write to CND, Eastbourne House, Bullards Place, London E2.

EVENTS

Singers Club. Every Saturday at Union Tavern, Lloyd Baker Street, WC1. Residents include: Peggy Seeger, Ewan MacColl, Sandra Kerr, Frankie Armstrong. March 20 Sandra and Frankie feature Women in Folk Song 40p

WOMEN UNDER APARTHEID one day conference Saturday April 24th Central London Poly. Women's role in the South African freedom struggle and what British women can do. Details and applications from Anti-Apartheid Movement, 89 Charlotte St, London W1 01-580 5311

National Abortion Campaign benefit 27th March. Telephone 01-485 4303

CONFERENCE CONFERENCE CONFERENCE

" 50th Anniversary
General Strike "
April 23 24 25
EXHIBITION by
National Museum
of Labour History
£3.00 for weekend
Details from:
Peter Cresswell
T.U.C. Group
Sussex University

CLASSIFIEDS

JOB

COMMUNITY SETTLEMENT requires a person with teaching experience prepared to work in a therapeutic community in West London. We have 32 residents aged between 12 and 18, who are educationally under-achieved and emotionally disturbed rather than ESN or maladjusted. They are referred to us by the local authority social security Dept who pay the fees. We have a staff of twelve, two of whom are full-time teachers. Salary commensurate with age, qualifications and experience. Residential facilities are available. Applications should be made to: The Director, Mrs. R.A. Laslett-O'Brien, 137 Holland Rd, London W14 (01-603 3842)

NORTH KENSINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD LAW CENTRE: General worker; ability to type well, cope with reception. Interest in learning to advise and help with juvenile, housing problems, etc. Ability to work on one's own as well as with the rest of us; ten general workers, three solicitors. Please write with full details of yourself including a brief statement of why you want to work with us immediately to 74 Golborne Rd London W10. Tel 01-969 7473

WORKING WITH PENSIONERS Camden Task Force needs fourth member of a closely working team helping to inform, support and involve pensioners. Individual and group work. Enthusiasm and imagination essential as well as experience in community work. Age immaterial. Start in April. Salary: £2,712 p.a. Apply Camden Task Force, 6 Malden Road, NW5 Tel: 267 3381

WANTED

WOMAN AND CHILD: Large room in mixed N1 legal squat. Share childcare of 3 year old some afternoons. 3.30 to 5.30. Jane 248 Caledonian Rd, N1

WOMEN'S FILM COLLECTIVE wants to hear of your experiences of, and opinions about, secretarial work. 10a Connaught St, W2

COUPLE WITH SMALL CHILD returning from Tanzania July - August require modest accommodation anywhere in London. Willing to share. Box 555

4th PERSON WANTED FOR shared house in Stockport. Box 453

HELP! Spare Rib desperately needs storage space for back copies (at present many rotting in rain) preferably in easy reach of London: dry basement/garage/attic etc. Contact Janie of Spare Rib 01-437 2070

I'm planning to make a 30 min film on abortion, in the Midlands area, for use in women's groups, schools, etc. A local consultant has given permission to film an abortion and women I know are willing to make available their experiences but I need £600 to make it. Offers of help to Box 454

COURSES

THE POLITICS OF HEALTH and how it affects women: informal course run by Jill Rakusen beginning 20th April 7.30pm. Fee £1. Details from University Extra-Mural Dept., 57-59 Oakfield Ave, Glasgow G12 (041 339 8855 Ext. 395)

GROUPS

WORCHESTER, EVERSHAM, PETERSHORE socialist women interested in new group. Phone Val. Peopleton 281

Women interested in forming feminist/theory/consciousness-raising group in Pimlico. Contact Cathy Lunn, 116 Catchbook St, SW1

CHESTER CHE mainly women's section. Meetings weekly. Contact the secretary, PO Box 20, Chester CH1 1UJ

THERAPY

PRIMAL THERAPY write Jenny James, Atlantis, Burtonport, Letterkenny, Co Donegal, Eire

Woman psychotherapist (Jungian) now has vacancies in Highgate area. Tel: 01-348 5593 before 10am

PERSONAL

Woman (33) with one child 1½ second due April seeks another in similar circumstances for mutual help. Hammersmith Chiswick area. Box 45a

Male 28 seeks female for decent friendship. Please telephone 01-515 2473

Young mother wishes to exchange baby-sitting duties with similar Edinburgh. Box 452

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Photodates, SAE to Dent S.R., 29 Westfields Avenue, London SW13

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spare
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Spare Rib needs reporters and news photographers up and down the country.

We want to increase our coverage of women's strikes, the abortion campaign, community organising - action round housing, nurseries, health, women's aid.

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We can't pay, but you can help let other women know what women in your area are doing.

WRITE NOW to
News Reporting, Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St., London W1A 4XS.

Work to Role

a new play

by the Women's Theatre Group

The play opens with a visiting lady guest addressing the audience as school leavers on speech day: 'I know you boys will be required to give muscle and brain to renew the country's vitality . . . But to you girls I have something special to say . . . whatever else women may become, we always have been and always will be the heart and soul of the family . . . "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world".'

After school, a woman cleaner sweeps up the mess: ' . . . the hand that rocks the cradle — rocks the cradle — carries the shopping — wipes the baby's bum — goes to the laundrette — changes the sheets —'

Work to Role is an hour-long play which sets up to explore the way in which a girl's choice of job and the education she receives for it, is bound up with her domestic role. The play is a rapidly moving complex of short scenes, a mixture of funny and acutely caught realism, some brief 'straight' pieces of information (how you arrange to pay your tax and national insurance), punctuated by melodically economic songs like satirical advertisement jingles — and a superb work song without any musical accompaniment in which a group of factory women slap their hands rhythmically against their overalls as they sing.

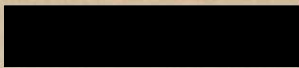
The group's previous play, *My Mother Says* . . . was a linear story about a young girl who thought she was pregnant. With her friend she learns the importance of a greater understanding of contraception. The play clearly came down on the side of a liberalisation of attitudes to sex outside marriage, and to sex education, as well as commenting on the importance of women acting in solidarity with one another.

This second play takes on a very much more complicated area, in which two apparently separate areas (home and work) are shown to be linked, which immediately raises all sorts of questions. The group tackle the complexity by pegging their themes onto an extended sketch of one girl's dilemma as she leaves school with five O-levels. Through her we are introduced to a range of other women at different points along the home-work scale. The girl (Rosie) is initially pressured in her choice of job (a) by her boyfriend who obviously is trying to mould her into a nice stay-at-home wife, and (b) her Mum, a woman with four kids who's worked in a factory all her life, and who is a militant shop steward. In her we have the type of older woman trade unionist, an intuitive

feminist in that she understands the particular problems and needs of women, but who still asserts defensively that she hasn't 'got time for this women's lib business'. Mum argues that Rosie should get herself a proper job, whether she gets married or not, and although she is objectively more 'correct' than Rosie's boyfriend, we see that Rosie must make her decisions out of her own conscious understandings — not simply in response to the demands of other individuals.

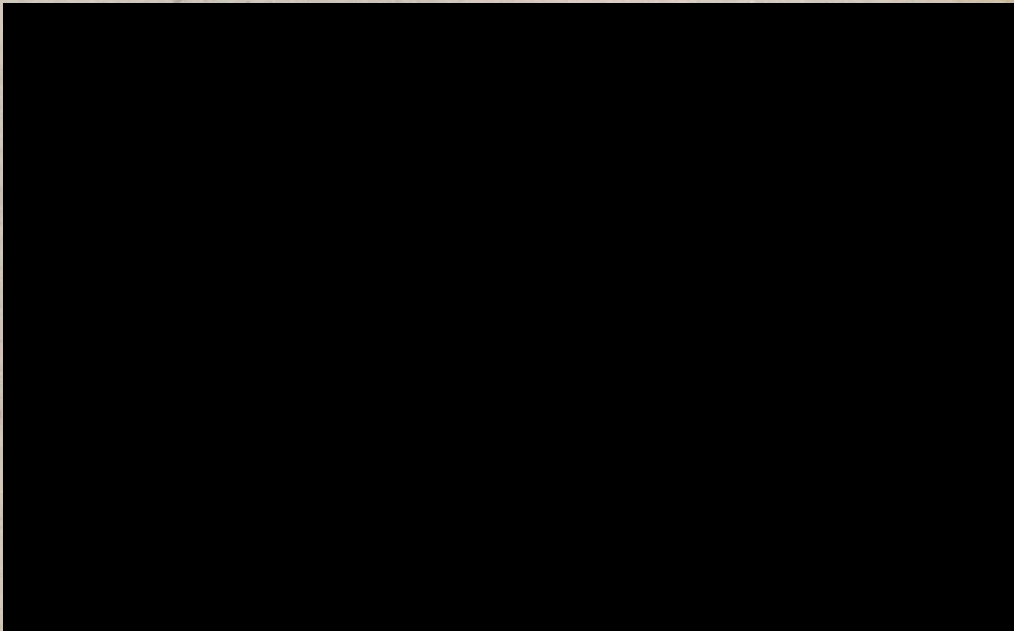
The other women who exert influence and from whose experience Rosie learns as well as from her own, are a single working mother who has made the positive decision to bring up her baby

alone and who works in a hamburger joint in the evening while Rosie's Mum looks after the baby, and the other women with whom she works. Rosie herself gets a temporary secretarial job, and we are given a rundown on three areas of women's work: factory (unionised), casual work (secretarial, unorganised), and super-exploited (catering, in this case un-unionised). Two of the waitresses decide they've had enough and want to take some action, but Mum warns them that they will be much stronger if they join and get the backing of the Transport & General Workers' Union. After some discussion they do, and literally operate a go-slow (while the



Left, factory song 'The Boss's Darling':
"Your patience and dexterity
He's endlessly adoring
He says you're suited to the job
Which means the job is boring."

Below left, Jean Hart and Clair Chapman
"Women have only themselves to blame . . .
none of them come to union meetings".



Below, Temp. Agency scene, Jane Meadows as
Rosie (left) and Mica Nava as interviewer.
"You're lucky dear, there are a few job
possibilities. How about 'Girl Friday size 12 for
small fashion firm. Some modelling . . . The
Thermal Underwear Company . . . Uxbridge
Road."

hamburgers cool rapidly between kitchen
and table) which appears to be successful.

The women and union question is
roundly treated; while the dominant
statement rightly is that women should
join unions, other points of view are
represented — the libertarian direct
action view, the dour individual who
hasn't a good word to say for unions.
The domestic side of the 'role' question
is similarly extended beyond Rosie and
her Mum (different generations faced
with similar choices) to the single mother
who has to deal with the hostile
moralism of the Social Security inter-
viewer who assumes that her baby's
father must be made to take responsi-
bility, and cannot understand a woman's
need to be economically independent.

Finally, throughout the play is the
demonstration of the changing of
consciousness through the friendship
and solidarity of women with each
other; and this is demonstrated through
the words and actions of the more

active political women in juxtaposition
with the women who are reactionary in
various ways — the female head of the
employment agency, Social Security
interviewer, sexy and sexist head
waitress in the burger bar. This is a
product of the fact that the group is an
all-women's group, and all parts must
be played by women. The message
about self-determination of an all-
women's theatre group, in which male
characters never appear on stage and in
which women who take an objectively
ruling class position (the 'baddies' listed
above) clearly demonstrate that female
solidarity is not an inevitable thing, that
not all women are sisters and that there
are women who are both anti-feminist
and anti-working class. Obviously this
also places some limitations on what the
group can show — i.e. it can never show
direct struggles between women and
men, only the women's account of it.
But in this play, in the same way that
the group shows that not all women are

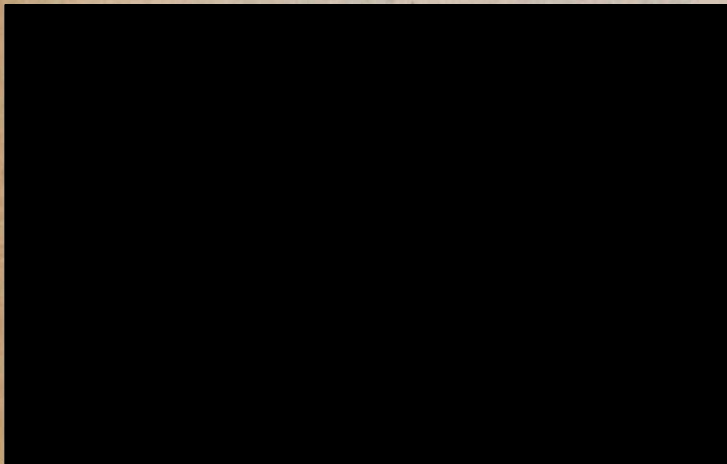
necessarily feminists, care is taken that
the invisible men in the characters' lives
are not all male chauvinist pigs, though
the boyfriend is obviously a budding
piglet.

The inter-relation of home and work
for women leads this play towards a
more socialist formulation of feminist
questions than was evident or necessary
in the earlier play; and this is clearly a
provocative and challenging element to
both pupils and teachers in the school
audiences for which the play was prima-
rily made. The play suggests that the
decisions girls make now could have an
important effect on their lives in years
to come, and outlines some of the
decisions they may be asked to make in
those years. It thus challenges each girl
to examine her own assumptions about
what her 'role' is to be, and what she
wants it to be.

The group follow each performance
with small group discussions, and
comments and criticisms from their
audiences provide a sounding board
against which they can test the correct-
ness and usefulness of both their
message and the theatrical medium they
use. This means that small things in the
play are continually changed, and while
the overall movement and message of the
play which were hammered out during
its preparation remain, its detailed
validity is always being tested in
practice.

The play is available for bookings, for
£40 in the London area, a bit more
outside. It is well worth seeing. Contact
the group for details: c/o Anne Engel,
22a Grosvenor Avenue, London N5
(01-226 4243).□

Micheline Wandor



Left, waitress song
with Clair Chapman,
Sue Eatwell and
Lyn Ashley:
"We dish out sex
appeal with meals
And serve the chips
with style
A customer will tip
us well
For service with a
smile."

Poems by Judy Barrington

I am a victim of
migraines
insomnia
the taxman
my landlord
and patriarchal institutions which say
I am a deviant.
I am a victim of
my family
who think I am a
middle class
high spirited
ex-career-wife
who has turned a little
'eccentric
(but knows how people like us behave).
I am a victim of
the garage
which lies to me about my car
because I am a woman
and cannot understand
these things;
and of men in cinemas
and tube trains
who whisper obscenities
while I cringe with illogical victim-guilt;
and of my mother
who died horribly
before I had time
to wish her gone,
leaving me
guilty
to search her out in my lovers
and hate her
for being a victim too,
and hate her more
for being a victim
of me.

No one can be a victim of me;
the guilt
will throttle or paralyse me
soon.
If you find yourself
under my feet
please don't notice
that I'm treading on you.

last night when you fell asleep
in my arms
your muscles twitched
for a long time.
I wanted to unravel them
gently with my fingers
strand by strand
and lay them tidily
on your bones

for a rest.

Drawings by Alison Fell

It's 1976, and the Select Committee are still discussing whether women can have abortions when they need them.



ONE WOMAN'S ABORTION

IF SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME A year ago that it was possible to be three and a half months pregnant and not even suspect it, I wouldn't have believed it.

Now, one and a half abortions later, I read in one of the largest women's magazines the firsthand account of a woman who went into labour at full term, not knowing she had been pregnant for nine months, and I believe every word.

When I left home seven years ago, one of the things I was looking for was a bloke to live with or at least have a steady relationship with. It had taken me about four years to actually "make it" in bed with someone, after a fairly ordinary and Catholic upbringing. I started living with John and went on the Pill at the same time. It wasn't so easy to get the Pill then. I had to go right across London to the Brook Clinic in Elephant and Castle. Brook was the only place that would see "single" girls with no fuss. You were simply treated as a woman — which made quite a change for me. ►

It used to annoy me no end that he never cried once.

John and I split up two and a half years later. I had several different relationships with people. Some were just one-off things, others lasted a bit longer. I was unsettled, trying to work out how to get on with the things that seemed most important to me. I wanted to change things. I wanted to help make that change in society. And I somehow expected my relationships with men to be stable, and wondered why they weren't. I thought it should be possible to have personal and sexual relationships with the people I wanted to, and that this should be compatible with my ideas and develop with the life and politics I was part of.

My problem was that my side of it never felt so important as what the blokes were saying or doing. And — it's the same old story — I'd start giving in on things, or just dropping them. Or we wouldn't discuss what I was doing very much.

Xmas 1974 was the tail-end of my second "long" relationship with someone. Paul and I had been close friends and lovers during two years of living together at a time of big upheavals in both our lives. By Xmas, after three months of fierce arguments and disagreements, he had already moved away and I was at my most miserable. I was near to tears for days at a time. During our arguments I'd often cry in the pub or on the tube. (It used to annoy me no end that he never cried once.) And when I was on my own I found it horrible that all my thoughts and feelings were focussed on one person, when I wanted to be able to think and feel about all the things I was involved in. I was bitter, jealous and terribly alone.

For years, as long as I could remember, I had had periods of morbid depression. It's like being on the verge of madness. In a way it is the verge of madness. And I've often thought that

its when women (and some men) get into these states, that they are classified as schizophrenic. (The film *Family Life* shook me up totally. At the end of watching it, I cracked inside and just cried and cried. It seemed like so much of my life. But the therapy-type solution seemed inadequate.)

It's impossible to talk to people when you are in a state like that. It seemed unfair to lay it on to my other friends. And in a way it wasn't the mood itself that needed sorting out. It was everything about how I controlled my life. How I had to do, learn and think the things which were important to me.

I felt completely torn about by two things. *One* was that almost instinctively, I just wanted to get back immediately into my relationship with Paul, put all the bitterness away and carry on as before (which meant trying to live with the frustration of never being sure what I really thought, whether I was right about things myself). *The other* was feeling that the time had come when I had to determine my own life in a positive way, men or no men. I wanted to prove to myself what I had always suspected — that these moods of black and bitter depression weren't just a personal failing on my part, but were a product of bourgeois society where we are divided on every level, continually taking our frustrations and cynicism out on each other, instead of using that energy to change the society we live in.

After desperately trying to heal my impossible relationship with Paul and failing, I decided that my life and ideas had to change. I had to get to know myself, instead of continually looking for people who I could escape into.

Part of this process was going off the Pill. I began to wonder whether the Pill itself encouraged certain moods. I don't think this is necessarily true, as I have always had bouts of depression. But I wanted to control my own body as much as possible. I got fitted with a cap.

At the same time, I began using the "safe" period, using a thermometer. After my period I used the thermometer again, and after about 36 days stupidly decided I must have ovulated, even though I hadn't yet had a period, and stopped using the cap.

By this time, I had a very affectionate but casual relationship with Joe, an old friend of mine. I was determined that it should be utterly equal. I was going to express my ideas and do what I wanted even if it threatened the

relationship. I was no longer prepared to *try* to please. After all, I had nothing to lose since I had begun enjoying my freedom. No one to phone up, or consult with every day. Reading into the night as long as I wanted. Getting up for work in my own time. My mind seemed to take a leap. I had to determine everything I stood for by myself. I was calmer. Paul and I slept together again once or twice. For me it was half ecstatic and half total misery. A real contradiction. Ecstatic for all the old things between us and intolerably tense and miserable because my new energy and independence were just ignored.

By this time as well, because I was trying to be open and honest with myself, my anger and frustration was out in the open, instead of hidden inside me. And nearly all this anger was directed at Paul. I blamed him personally for the way I felt, and for other things I felt were wrong. (And he blamed me too.) But at the same time I felt guilty that thinking about him took up so much of my time. It was stupid. I had to force myself to direct this energy to things I thought were more important.

I must have got pregnant some time in April, but didn't know. By May, I had had no period since March. I had a negative pregnancy test. My doctor thought I probably wasn't pregnant so he prescribed me Primodos, a pill which is meant to bring on late periods. For a week beforehand, I had had the most terrible cramps, like a period but much worse. The doctor offered no explanation, just telling me to take the Primodos. They give you two tablets and you have to take them on two consecutive days. I took one, and that night I slept with Joe. I was using the cap. Someone told me that Primodos gives you cramps, so I took a few aspirins and had a really nice night! Next morning, which was a Saturday — a rare chance to lie in — I took my cap out and inside it was an inch long piece of gristle. I stared at it thinking "What the hell is that?" Then it dawned on me . . . It must be a tiny foetus. It was fascinating. I looked at it for a long time. It was sort of grey-brown, opaque. Much thicker at one end than the other, with tiny, tiny buds sprouting at the bottom end, just like a little fish. Then I flushed it away and went and told the other people I share a flat with. I looked up *Our Bodies Ourselves* and estimated that it was a four to five week old foetus.

That week I had a period and felt

sick and ghastly. We'd organised an abortion meeting in the hospital where I work, so I stayed for that, then I took a week on the sick. I still got cramps, so the doctor gave me pain killers. At no time did he examine me, neither did he particularly believe my story about the foetus. Yet I found out soon after that two women I know had had similar spontaneous abortions.

If I had understood more about how my body worked then, I would have known something was wrong. Both the women I spoke to said that their abortions had come out in a mass of jelly and liquid — the placenta. Mine was totally on its own. I didn't think much of it as the doctor wasn't very fussed, but I started getting physically run-down and pathetic.

I went on the abortion demonstration on June 21st feeling physically sick but jubilant at our strength.

Because I felt physically sick, I began to get morbid again. I felt bitter then angry with myself for allowing these feelings to control me. I was determined not to be destructive and get cynical. I had another period and felt totally exhausted. What the hell was wrong with me?

Joe began to get concerned about me. Paul seemed completely indifferent. I felt as though to him I was an "emotional female" so we couldn't ever discuss it. I tried talking about it with other women. In fact I approached a lot of people, mostly women. But I also held back. I didn't want to pour out my confused and anxious emotions. I didn't want to be continually preoccupied and moody. I wanted to be strong, outward-looking and stable and in control of what I thought and did. I wanted the cycle of "moods" to go away, and not to drag someone else into it.

At last Paul and I finished our relationship once and for all. It was a tremendous relief, but sad too.

During July, I felt ill almost every day. But I didn't want to keep going to the doctor. I put it down to "nerves" and started going for long walks thinking that my body was simply run-down.

I was also masturbating which was comforting. Somehow in myself, I was still all right. And I think it was because I knew it was all down to me, so masturbating or going to bed early was like putting a friendly arm around myself. And as I began to like myself better, it worked quite well.

Suddenly, two weeks after my last "period", I had a sudden rush of blood

just before going to bed. Something was definitely wrong. Someone phoned the doctor for me and he told me to come in the next morning. At last, an internal examination. The doctor said, "Well, there's definitely something there but I don't know what it is!" and sent me to the local hospital. More internals, and a urine test and the verdict — I was about three months pregnant, maybe more, but "something" was wrong. My last two "periods" were, in fact, haemorrhages, so was the "rush" of blood. I had to go into hospital immediately. I was a bit stunned at all this. I phoned work to say I wouldn't be in, saying something vague about my womb.

The junior hospital doctor who took my notes and examined me was a woman, very calm and reassuring. But I was scared. I knew that I wasn't prepared to have a baby. I don't want children at this stage in my life. But I didn't want to blurt out "Can't you just give me an abortion?"

I was relieved to have a day in bed while they gave me tests. The most interesting one was "ultra-sound". This is to get a picture of the womb without using X-ray which might damage the foetus. "Ultra-sound" picks up sound waves and makes a picture out of them. A young woman technician rubbed oil on my stomach and explained everything she did. I was an "interesting" case because whatever it was inside me was not at all normal. Everyone was agreed about that. After all the tests, the registrar came back with the young woman doctor and gave me the results — three to four months pregnant. I said I didn't really want a baby. So they took me on one side and told me to go back to work straight away and rush around, and that within a month I would have a miscarriage.

The prospect was daunting. They said I would know when it was coming on and I would be bound to make it to hospital on time. It seemed rational in a way. I suppose I was somehow prepared to accept the advice of "experts".

So I went back to work, and this time I felt all of three and a half months pregnant. My belly was definitely growing. I looked at it amazed. How could I have not known I was pregnant for three and a half months? But what about my spontaneous abortion two and a half months earlier? Most doctors I saw dismissed this as a figment of my imagination, but the ones that chose to believe me thought I must have been having twins originally!

Then I went to my own doctor. He was more shocked than I had been at what the hospital doctors had said, and told me to get an appointment for an abortion. So I went back to the hospital, but this time I saw the boss — the consultant gynaecologist. Because of the local abortion campaign, I knew he was a sympathiser of SPUC, but I felt too nervous and shaken to know what was best to do. He treated me like a five-year-old, and I felt every bit a five-year-old. Even after knowing the background (there was a risk of deformity, etc.) he kept saying to me, "But you're a sensible girl, I can't see any reason why you shouldn't have a child. You're young and healthy. Why don't you want it?"

It was clear that there was no way in which he was going to understand the way I lived, my views and what I wanted out of life. At the same time I was saying to myself, "Act unstable, make out you're unbalanced". It wasn't difficult. I mumbled a few replies and tears started streaming down my face. He said, "Well, even if I give you an abortion, it can't be down there" (meaning a vaginal abortion), "it has to be with a drip and you'll have to wait two more weeks for that." (This meant an induced abortion going into labour which can last 36 hours.) I knew what he meant and I thought . . . "You bastard. It's barbaric and there must be other methods."

I suddenly got ferociously angry and hysterical all at once. I managed to say, "I don't know if I believe you", but I was sobbing pretty badly and got carted off to the social worker. They asked me who the father was, what my parents did, who was I living with. And I was thinking, "I can't go on with this." She said, "Come back in two weeks and we'll tell you whether we've decided to give you an abortion or not."

I walked out, sobbing like a lunatic.▶

**"You're young
and healthy.
Why don't you
want it?"**

I felt as though I was paying for my sanity.

Luckily I phoned someone to meet me. We went home and phoned the Pregnancy Advisory Service. I went to see them that afternoon. It was completely different. I felt like a normal woman with a normal problem. My pregnancy was confirmed yet again at 14 weeks. You can usually only have vacuum aspiration up to 12 weeks. PAS said they did a special vacuum aspiration method for 12 to 17 weeks pregnancies. For me this was a combination of a vacuum and a D&C (scrape). This is a highly skilled technique, which is why many NHS hospitals don't do it, but the PAS doctor said they don't take the trouble to learn. In fact this method has been possible for 25 years.

PAS said it would cost £60 plus £7 consultation fee. I scraped the money together and had a straightforward abortion through PAS three days later. I felt as though I was paying for my sanity. Everything about it was relaxed and good except that you had to pay, and the Harley Street doctor must have been making a packet out of it. I basically disagree with private practice, but PAS has pioneered methods and clinics which should be taken up by the NHS free and as a right for everyone.

After all this, I had found out a lot more about my body. An Indian woman doctor said an interesting thing to me after the abortion. At first, she said I should go back on the Pill, but I wanted to wait a longer time before I used it again so I asked her what she used. She said the cap. I asked if she also used the "safe" period. She replied, "The Safe Period? There is no such thing as the safe period. Look, my dear, do you like making love with your boyfriend?" I nodded. She said, "Well then, if you go out with him and have a really nice evening, you have a meal or you go dancing or have a few drinks. When you come back home and make love, no matter what time of the month it is, that can make you ovulate. Use the cap every single time and it should be all right."

We now use it every time, usually with Durex too. I don't think I'd be happy with this method if I slept with someone every night. But since I don't, it has just become a part of love-making. It's also been useful in sharing responsibilities for contraception with Joe and in explaining the way a woman's body works.

I waited another three and a half months for a period, but now feel much better physically and mentally.

Within 18 months, I feel that I have drastically changed my life for the better. Obviously I may get depressed again. But I am full of ideas and energy. I am more stable *in myself* and more hard-working (which I enjoy) than I have ever been.

The abortion itself was just part of this change. I learnt a lot about myself from having to cope with it alone. I'd begun to see the need to control my own life, and the abortion clinched it. It also forced me to come to terms with the reasons why I don't want children at the moment. (Even though I have always vaguely assumed that I would have kids one day, I don't want kids 'by accident'.) I am committed to many other things at the moment which I want to see through. They're my responsibility.

The whole experience also made clear to me what I wanted in my personal relationships. I don't want my sexual relationships to dominate my life because I think it leads me into a situation where male/female conditioning creeps up and can't be controlled.

I am more determined to have friendships on a wide level and not discriminate against the people I don't sleep with. This has been at the back of my mind for years. It always seemed so unfair to me to invest so much in just one relationship with one man or one woman. After all, if you can make a close friend of one person, why not be equally and genuinely supportive of all the other people you know?

I see Joe once or sometimes twice a week. It's a lovely friendship. I have more time for other people and more time for myself. And more time and energy to fight to change this rotten society.

I wanted to write about my own experiences of abortion and some of the problems and pressures in my life at the time because I think it shows a lot

about 'A Woman's Right to Choose' — the slogan of the National Abortion Campaign. I think it shows that our right to choose can be about fundamental changes in our lives and the kind of society we live in, and that many women are confronted by some of the same things as I am.

I went to the National Abortion Campaign Conference in October. In many ways the conference was tremendous. The fact that nearly a thousand women came together to discuss how we could fight and organise around something so important to women, especially at this time, was a great boost to our unity and solidarity.

As a campaign, it's much stronger than previous women's movement campaigns. It's coordinated nationally, and rooted in something very real that's happening to women *now*. Also we've learnt a lot from what has been done in the past, about the need to organise a campaign from the grass roots.

But even so, what I feel is wrong with the campaign is that our activities at a local level don't dominate what is talked about. At the conference and at other national meetings there have been endless arguments and in-fights about how NAC should be structured. I think we should talk much more about how we organise in different areas, and how we really *build* a campaign around the issues of abortion. For instance, getting out-patient abortion clinics in local hospitals, talking about abortion facilities to mothers' groups and schools.

There are many different women in the campaign — teachers, secretaries, hospital workers, housewives, students, social workers, and also many with kids in playgroups and schools where they can meet other mothers. As I see it, the job of the 20,000 of us who marched in June is to take the question of abortion, and everything connected with it, to a wider and wider audience, especially in areas where we live or work. Abortion groups have come together to change something based on our needs as women, in the face of right-wing opposition from SPUC and the vague promises of the present Labour Government.

We are not going to sit back and see the Government and doctors and consultants reorganise things the way *they* want just because there's a crisis.

We want to organise the changes that are taking place **FOR OURSELVES.** □

Marie Arnold

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BOOKS

FLYING

by Kate Millett

(Hart-Davis £5.00, or
Paladin paperback £1.50
from May 29)

Millett's autobiography for the year 1971 assumes some knowledge of the events which followed the publication of *Sexual Politics* — the article in *Time* magazine which made her for a while the media's token (articulate) feminist; the lectures and conferences; the denunciation in *Time* and her public statement of lesbianism.

She is not concerned to describe the public image, though it is this that ensures that the book she wants to write is going to be published; it's going to be read. Why after so much feminist criticism is Millett writing a book about herself? She says that she is writing herself out of an anxiety state. In the first section, 'Vertigo', she is writing largely about the high which followed the publication of *Sexual Politics* and the sudden beginning of public life: the endless travelling, the rootlessness, the appropriation of herself by the media — all more frightening than satisfying. And the criticism, the aggression, the hostile voice forcing her to come out when she had just lost the relationship by which she identified herself. It seems that in publishing her life, she is demonstrating that she is a private person, an ordinary suffering human being. It's horribly ironic that her self-affirmation must be public: her means of recovery from publicity is determined by her public identity as a writer. At the end of the book, the 'writer' has become an alien voice which refuses to be silenced.

Flying seems to be, initially at least, a kind of vindication by suffering. Millett is asking us to put a limit on her guilt. *Flying* is (partly) what she has suffered through self-accusation and our criticism; it must be enough. Throughout the book it is clear that she uses guilt to avoid punishment; an immediate panic which prevents self-assessment. (Though she constantly works on herself where there is no external pressure.) And so the reader is presented with alternatives on Millett's terms: either you accept her because she is vulnerable or you reject her because she makes excuses.

It's a strangely seductive book, fascinating without any apparent structure for holding interest. Since it represents an internal monologue, there is little biographical narrative. It's movement, the flow of the individual sentences, the transitions which holds one to *Flying*. A notebook style, but like poetry, very close to the pattern of thought.

And it's hard, when you're recording your thoughts, to give independent existence to the people you are thinking about. Millett's friends and lovers are part of her as the characters of a novel are part of the author. (I suspect that she also processes her friends in this way outside the book.) Her husband, Fumio, is an exception; perhaps because his artistic and his male autonomy is not questioned. Mallory, her sister, on the other hand, takes on the role of conscience, fighting Millett's ambition to be generous and loved. Sometimes Millett deliberately makes us aware of her own bias, or the limits of her perception: her portrayal of Vita is consistently shown to be influenced by Millett's disgust at their appalling destructive relationship; she is searching continually for what Vita might be otherwise.

What right does Millett have to invade and expose her friends? Millett only asks herself whether they are strong enough, which suggests that they should be. The question implies a ruthless sense of her own rights and objective capacities which is totally uncharacteristic of her. People have been hurt by *Flying*. However it's true that Millett has come to represent feminists, and the culture to which she belongs is influencing us; her subjective truth has a lot to offer.

And anyway Millett has a right to self-justification and she has a fairly instinctive dislike of privatisation or "meanness".

Moreover, one of the purposes of *Flying* is to celebrate her friends, "friendship" perhaps; the whole glorious romantic vision of love. She says, for example, of her lost love Celia, "it was an idea I loved, a vision she gave me of how to live". She also has a romantic vision of herself; taking Daedalus, an artist who built himself wings to fly with, as her symbol. Millett is also an artist and she feels that an artist is someone who flies high; but it is the world's reaction to her writing which makes her position dangerously lonely. Love is also flying: not only as joy for Millett, but also as a writer she hopes to give her friends a place in the stars. She celebrates greatness: something in a few people which reaches beyond ordinary humanity.

Millett's self-concept contains a certain magnificence. Her cosmic aspirations, her ignorance of money as power (guilt in buying for herself, joy in buying for other people), her spontaneous energy and freedom are all part of the same image. But magnificence is what Millett associates with her father who left her mother because he wouldn't be trapped by their provincial respectability.

Magnificence means carelessness for Millett; it means male generosity, made possible by privilege; it means ultimately the male as ruler/aggressor. Although there is no explicit role-playing in her relationship with Vita, in her mind she is the husband because her freedom is and must be destroyed by Vita's lack of it. Each rejection of Vita is a reassertion of the male. And each time she records her anger at the violence of men, she describes her response as potentially violent. She identifies with violence; she takes responsibility for it. This is a conversation with a lorry driver on a hike:

"What sort of day was it?" thinking of my own. My mother was assaulted, beaten and raped today in New Haven by a man who broke into her apartment. She is seventy six years old. Jesus how very sorry I am I say, knowing never in my lifetime would I be able to say how utterly sorry I was. Seventy six years old and raped her. How insane with misery you would be to inflict that on an old woman cowering blood all over her face in the basement apartment, discovering that I have made it a basement myself." She seems to be identifying herself with the situation of the rapist rather than with the victim.

Millett's pacifism is a necessity of this self-characterisation. So is her habitual guilt. And, as a result of it, a lot of emotion is excluded from *Flying*; she doesn't allow herself hatred or impatience or (much) vanity. Occasionally, one is aware of situations in which she must have been angry: there are two arguments described later by O'Rourke (who takes part in them) in terms which are quite inexplicable unless Millett said more than she is prepared to report. But largely I would guess that she avoids, represses these feelings, denying herself these effective defences against the world. Finally, she never assesses the relationship between the unacceptable 'male' and, for example, her delight in material generosity to lovers. The control is too rigid to allow for compromise.

However the spontaneity of Millett's lifestyle is close to the happening, close to freak culture. *Flying* is written very much after the style of film: unrehearsed, shot in the raw and pieced together. It has a bland apolitical day-to-day comprehensiveness. Millett is surprised, by Lessing's questioning of the usefulness of literature, into saying: "Art is of itself surely". *Flying* is primarily an escape for the polemicist leader, not a book of propaganda. Specifically Millett gives us no basis for argument that a sexist or a racist or a violent society is wrong (though she assumes it) and therefore no means of changing it. But this uncritical approach sometimes produces very realistic descriptions, as for example, when ►

she goes to a divorce party to watch her friends sawing their conjugal bed in half, with unresolved feelings of nausea and admiration. Perhaps the party is, as it is intended to be, a political gesture; Millett doesn't want to give a final assessment of her reactions. Her indecision certainly allows us a more real picture. Can autobiography do more?

Flying is a consciously innovative book in its descriptions of women making love to women which is erotic and yet simple and unsensational. Millett is not concerned with argument; therefore she has nothing to prove. And so lesbian sexuality can take its place in her autobiography, naturally; a celebration of its own rightness.

"And tonight blots out all the voices of my life, their squalid words hitting like stones: sin, perversity, infidelity, scandal. Now I outcry them, certain, not only through the joys of sense which in themselves become and ethnic, but through a new perception that virtue, ultimately, is only another human being. Rejoicing in our bodies' women's beauty, I can refute them, knowing when I die I will have lived in these moments; I come to it, you have your life in your time or you didn't. Mine now is looking down on the gold of her head between my thighs while the white sky brings its first light through the ivy's green in the windows."

Sophie Dick

BOOKS for children

SALLY-ANN'S UMBRELLA

by Petronella Breinburg
illustrated by Ossie
Murray
(Bodley Head, £1.85)

Black characters in children's picture books are not the strangers they once were; the paperback editions of Ezra Jack Keats' *Peter* books have seen to that. An important contribution to this trend is the work of Petronella Breinburg, a London from teacher from Surinam and in particular her Sean books (*My Brother Sean*, *Dr Sean*, *Sean's Red Bike*) which provide simple tales around the daily lives of small black children.

If these books do not reveal a concern to avoid sexist stereotyping (Sean's the doctor, she's the nurse), Breinburg's recent *Sally-Ann's Umbrella* is remarkable for being one of the first children's picture books that has as its main character a black girl. The vivid chalk illustrations by Ossie Murray (his first picture book) provide a rich and sympathetic view of

Sally-Ann's world, her mum and aunt and her adventures at school with her new umbrella.

Although Sally-Ann is nothing like as dynamic as Sean in *Sean's Red Bike*, for example, *Sally-Ann's Umbrella* can be warmly recommended for its beautiful pictures of black women and girls.

Andrew Mann
(Children's Rights Workshop)

NOBODY'S FAMILY IS GOING TO CHANGE by Louise Fitzhugh (Gollancz, £2.80)

The Sheridans are black New Yorkers, an 'ideal' American family, middle-class, with maid and two children at private school. Lawyer Daddy has achieved all this for his family in his fight to escape his youth when he was spat on "every day of his life... for being black".

When Emma (11) and Willie (7) do not live up to family standards, each dinner time becomes a battlefield. Emma (fat and with "Afro hair which for some reason did not stand up like everyone else's but grew sideways") announces her determination to be a lawyer, while Willie (slim and handsome) wants to be a dancer. Daddy thinks that men who dance are cissies and a bad example to aspiring black people, while Daddy and Mama disapprove of women lawyers - Mama suggests Emma might marry

one instead and raise "two lovely children".

Emma helps Willie get his way and become a dancer but her own struggle convinces her that "nobody's family is going to change". Her support will come from some of the girls at her school and their new-found solidarity is the beginning of their development as autonomous people.

Fitzhugh covers so much that is topical in this book - sex-role stereotyping, children's rights, black identity, to name but a few of the issues. She does it with a narrative that is full of understated, punchy dialogue and caustic wit - even her minor characters glow with life. The reader is plunged into the intense reality of Willie's passionate abandon to dance and Emma's no less passionate greed when faced with custard or mousse. Rarely does a writer convey so well the contrasting physical worlds of two children.

Underlying the comedy Fitzhugh reveals a sympathy for children and understanding of their struggles that make this book a landmark in writing for young people on contemporary themes. No easy solutions are suggested here.

Louise Fitzhugh died recently. The wisdom and warm humour of this her last book (*Harriet the Spy* was reviewed in *Spare Rib* 29), will long remain with her readers. For 10 years and upwards.

Rosemary Stones
(Children's Rights Workshop)



Emma: "... the Afro hair which, for some reason, did not stand up like everyone else's but grew sideways ..."

LOUISE FITZHUGH

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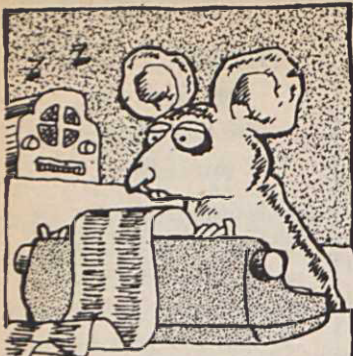
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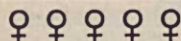
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JO SPENCE

THEATRE

MY NAME IS ROSA LUXEMBOURG

by Marianne Auricoste
translated by Pam Gems
Seen for a brief season at
the Soho Poly Theatre,
London
directed by Sue Todd
with Ann Mitchell, Maggie
Nichols and Mary
McCusker

The play had to be cut by about
one third, to fit into a lunchtime
slot; in addition, many of the
songs in it were rephrased by
Maggie Nichols. She sang them,
unaccompanied, in a Brechtian-
type amalgam of blues-jazz-folk
which was a musically effective
foil for the straight historical narra-
tive of Mary McCusker, and the
acting of Rosa Luxembourg by
Ann Mitchell.

The play and the production
were extremely interesting as an
exercise in a highly sophisticated
form of political theatre. On a
stage bare of props but for two
high stools, Rosa's desk and her
workroom are the only 'scenic'
elements, almost spilling off into
the audience. The impact of the
play thus relies totally on the
interaction of the three women

and their relationship to the
audience. Rosa herself never speaks
directly to the audience, but both
narrator and singer address her and
us; Rosa wears historical costume,
narrator and singer wear modern
dress. Thus Rosa is placed both
visually and communicatively in
history, with the other two women
acting as mediators between her
and us. This is the structure within

FILM

JAWS

Directed by Steven Spielberg

I never intended to see *Jaws*. By last summer I realised it was well on the way to being the cult movie of the year. However, when I suggested that I go to keep up with latest trends in movies, my friends reacted with horror. I was considered too delicate to take such a frightening and bloody film and I consigned it to that ever lengthening list of films like *Clockwork Orange*, *Straw Dogs* and *Rollerball* that I could never see. Then the word went round that *Jaws* was a "vagina dentata" movie symbolizing the psychological violence of the devouring vagina and the threatened male. Perhaps I could tolerate all that blood and severed limbs stuff if I saw it as symbolic.

Having seen it, or at least the parts when I had my eyes open, I now feel it is a really important film with interest especially for feminists. It is a product of mainstream culture, the commercial cinema and therefore a part of the ideological structure of society. By ideology I mean that film like other products of our culture reflects and reproduces the unconscious set of ideas and values of the dominant class. The very success of *Jaws* makes it worthy of our attention.

So what is important about the movie? In the first place its a good film, a well-made horror story. The tension is never too prolonged,

there's lots of pause for humour and incidental drama. It's a good family film with high adventure and no sex (?), laced with nice liberal sentiments for it exposes the small town's business community's desire to keep the shark attacks quiet, so that the tourists keep coming to their beaches.

The main characters interact on a dramatic level as well as representing modern archetypes: Brody, the good responsible family man, a police chief with a conscience; Hooper, the rich college boy scientist in denims and gold rimmed glasses with a privately financed sea-going laboratory; and Quint, the working class, old man of the sea who is contracted to kill the shark.

The second reason I think it's important is that *Jaws* echoes and popularises a main theme of American culture which culminated in *Moby Dick*, Melville's classic American novel of the sea. This great symbolic adventure story is about Captain Ahab's battle with the elemental forces of the sea represented by the great white whale, Moby Dick. It elevates to mythology the American consciousness of the struggle with the fearful Other, which sometimes is located in the unconquered forests, sometimes in the sea and all it contains (and most recently in the barren wastes of the moon). Just as Captain Ahab and his crew strive to conquer the Other in the sea by catching the famous white whale, Quint and Hooper and Brody set out to kill the shark.

The three men setting out to kill the shark repeats the figure three which recurs symbolically

which the present learns from the past.

But in the context of this play, what does it learn and how? We follow the whole span of Rosa's life, from birth, through turbulent political and personal activism and imprisonment, to violent assassination. Rosa herself writes furiously at her desk, speaks her letters (love and political), gives extracts from her speeches, and quotes from her pamphlets. The narrator shoots a complex of places, dates, accounts of her political development - initially as a member of the German Social Democratic Party at the end of the nineteenth century, then as part of a break-away group which founded the Spartakist group. So on the side of the past we have a view of history through the actions and words of one individual, a woman, and an important historical figure at that. Despite some brief explanatory phrases, this element in the play is highly sophisticated. It is likely to say most to, and to be best critically received by people who already have some knowledge of revolutionary history, and who can both absorb the sweep of dates and understand the changes in

political climate and struggle.

On the side of the political lesson, the present, the singer takes the main active role. Early on she undermines one of Rosa's speeches with a song attacking her for not staying at home, in the kitchen, like a woman should. But most of her later songs draw political conclusions aimed at us, the audience, not suggesting that we should take the specific tactical course Rosa took, but quite simply urging us to open our eyes to the lying bourgeoisie and get in there in the class struggle. The message appears aimed at the 'unconverted', those who scoff at a class analysis, as opposed to those who call themselves socialists but would disagree on details of analysis and strategy.

There is thus a structural contradiction in the play between the highly sophisticated political questions implicit in the historical element, and the crude sloganising of the message mediated to the audience. The play cannot satisfy both a revolutionary audience and a non-revolutionary one - the casual lunchtime crowd of central London, and thus in the end does a disservice to the needs of both

kinds of audiences. It becomes schematic in both its historical and political messages. Of course I'm not suggesting that any single 'audience' is necessarily purely revolutionary or non-revolutionary. But the play is an uneasy whole, even though taken separately the elements of performance, production and much of the selected writings are excellent. Possibly a future production of the uncut play might bring the two halves more clearly together and soften some of the schematic elements; possibly a play which took one or two episodes from her life, rather than trying to span a very complex political and individual whole, might better convey the message about what the present can learn from the past. Possibly the play also suggests that it is as vitally necessary for theatre to take up the complexities within revolutionary history and theory without always having one eye on the unconverted, without always having the hot breath of simple propaganda breathing through the footlights. It is a tribute to the strength and clarity of the production that such questions can be asked. Micheline Wandor



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(Empire House), W1.

throughout *Moby Dick*. It also suggests a contemporary interpretation of *Jaws* as a "Buddy Film". There are women in this film, but only as classic types or images. The sexual woman is Chrissy, the young girl who picks up a boy she hardly knows and runs before him down to the beach, shedding her clothes as she goes, and diving into the sea, like Venus returning to a watery tomb. Then there is Ellen, Brody's attractive but loyal wife. Finally there's the mother of the child victim who appears in widow's weeds to prompt Brody's conscience making him determined to destroy the voracious fish. Apart from these three basic types: Venus, Wife, and Mother, the real narrative of the film depends entirely on the male protagonists and the second half of the film concentrates on their fight with the Fish. Molly Haskell in *From Reverence to Rape* argues that modern film makers have shied away from the problems of presenting women in film and that in many all-male buddy films, woman as active protagonist or positive element has gone underground (e.g. *Butch Cassidy, Deliverance*).

I would like to suggest that in *Jaws* the problem of Woman has gone underwater. However, in order to put forward a feminist analysis of this film I need to draw on the work done by feminist film theorists. One of their key tools is psychoanalytic theory. They argue that in sexist ideology man is the centre and woman displaced as non-male. In Freudian terms she lacks a penis and appears therefore as non-male or castrated male, implying by her lack of phallus a threat of castration for the male. In ideological terms this threat can be dealt with in a number of ways, one of which is to fetishise woman herself as a phallus. This, argue the film theorists, can be seen in the semi-male person and figure of Mae West and also in pornographic representations of the leather bound, stiletto-heeled, monster female in Allen Jones' work (*Spare Rib* 8). For a full discussion of this see C. Johnston, *Notes on Women's Cinema*.

In *Jaws* the central action of the film is the struggle between the men and the shark. The shark threatening, maiming or even life destroying force, a voracious and huge set of jaws. But in shape it is also phallic. The poster advertising the film reveals this male-female combination. The rising pointed head of the fish aimed at the girl's genitals is distinctly phallic, but at the same time its triangular shape with the central gaping jaws is reminiscent of female genitalia. Thus a shark is a superb realisation of the phallic-fetishised female's castrating sexual power, a vagina dentata which is a Freudian term for a documented male fear of the devouring toothed vagina.

The opening scene of the film sets a distinctly sexual tone. The

nubile girl rushes provocatively down to the sea for a nude swim and is attacked by the shark, but her death is qualitatively different from the later victims. Her's is prolonged, she is pulled and pushed, thrown up and finally drawn down into the sea (and the jaws of the shark). Her screams rise and fall in a positively orgasmic crescendo and release. Sex and death are linked in this image of water and its dangers. All subsequent victims are male.

In the second half of the film, a menacing sense of horror is built up with terrifying shots of the surfacing fish all gaping jaws, and of its swift, powerful movements in the sea. A worried Hooper comments when the shark shows signs of attacking them that this is wholly unnatural behaviour for a fish. He seems genuinely disturbed and really frightened because it is on the attack.

Throughout the review I could have made comparison with the books of *Jaws* to show the structural changes in the movie which serve to make the latter considerably more disturbing and mythic than the second-rate adventure story of the original. Two significant changes in the film confirmed for me that a feminist view of the film was feasible. They both occur in the final scene and really convinced me that there was a powerful sexual and sexist undertone in the movie.

In the book Quint, the weird fisherman, is slowly drawn to his death when the shark heaves itself onto the stern of the sinking ship and its weight drags Quint, who has caught his leg in a rope, towards the shark. He is consumed but below the surface. After that final victory the shark dies by sinking to the bottom of the sea. In the film version Quint is drawn into the awaiting jaws and is slowly, horrifically eaten; first the legs, then the shark comes back for the torso, neatly taking him at the waist and consuming amid dreadful shrieks his genitals. But the fish doesn't die, it keeps coming and Brody is alone left as the ship tilts and sinks to face the fish. However, a spare canister of compressed air from Hooper's useless scientific gear floats off the deck into the jaws. (We have already been introduced to these silver and phallic [?] weapons as potentially explosive.) Brody watches the swift approach of the shark, takes aim and shoots a hole in the canister in the shark's mouth. It explodes inside the fish which rises up and sinks back into the sea in a beautiful arc amidst a softly red-tinged cloud of exploded air. The audience experiences a powerful release from the suspense of this final confrontation. The shark is dead – was it not well and truly fucked to death – penetrated and exploded in a pleasurable and final annihilation of its power?

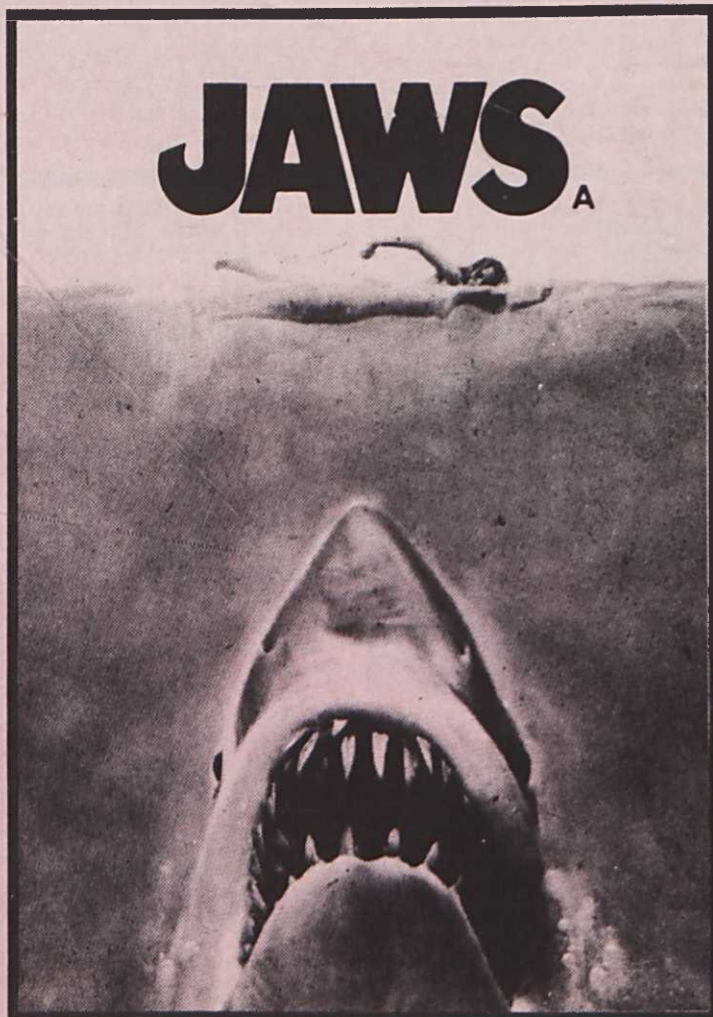
The vagina dentata is mastered by the man in a symbolic ejaculation of the canister inside the mouth.

Now many may be sceptical of this semi-Freudian interpretation, but I can offer some supporting evidence, though I must stress that what I am about to say should not be seen in a direct causal relationship to the production of *Jaws*. It does not at all surprise me that *Jaws*, the biggest seller in film history, was produced in 1975 which was the official celebration and appropriation of a new feminist assertion of women's rights. Throughout last year I came across sundry forms of male protest against women's claims for power. The *Sunday Times* ran an article entitled "Men at Bay" and argued that women's liberation was taking away something from men, i.e. their manliness, and underlying the rational arguments was an almost hysterical fear of social, psychological and sexual castration. I even found a similar fear expressed in more political terms in a document produced by the OECD on financial legislation and social policy which made it seem that any gains women make in such things as pensions can only mean discrimination against men. But the ultimate expression of this was a cartoon in the *Sunday Times* entitled "The Weaker Sex" in which Ms Gland the women's libber made her appearance as a huge woman, dwarfing a tiny man at her side, her vast breasts swinging freely around her waist and a triumphant smile on her face displaying an alarming array of teeth.

These coincidences show that the fear inspired by women's claims for a new, more positive role has actually come to the surface. But I am not suggesting that the makers of *Jaws* were in any way conscious of such a purpose in the film. Rather, analysis of the imagery in *Jaws* reflects the underlying or unconscious workings of ideology, which can be defined as the unconscious set of ideas that cultural products made by the dominant class, reflect and reproduce. To analyse this unconscious structure we need the science of the unconscious, psychoanalysis, which enables us to see how the unconscious functions and symbolizes threatening feelings that are unacceptable to the conscious.

In one way the very obvious dependence of *Jaws* on traditional American myths (already a way of dealing with underlying ideas and fears) and on the genre of the all-male adventure film, disguises the more fundamental sexual content. At some level the phenomenal success of *Jaws* relies on the security offered by such a disguise while allowing a cathartic release of castration fears that woman presents to the male-centred order.

Griselda Pollock



the Vote

THE day of the Senate elections dawned grey. The Parties had not been relying on sunshine to bring out the voters, it was the rainy season, but it was unusual for the sky to be overcast so early.

The men on polling station duty were already settling down behind the wooden trestle tables which had been set up on street corners, buttoned into raincoats if they owned one, wrapped in sheets of plastic if not.

A large turn-out was expected, probably the largest ever, not that any upset of the status quo was anticipated (that was unthinkable) but for the first time the Government had carried out a massive publicity campaign urging everyone over the age of eighteen to register as voters.

The most successful medium which had been used was television, even those who can't read and write can watch television.

Juana Perez was one of the illiterates who had received the message, and it had registered in her mind as an act of dignity it was her duty to perform. In fact it had seldom left her mind during the closing months of the campaign, and by now the simple act of marking her X had been striking terror in her heart for days.

Juana was twenty six and she had been a domestic servant for thirteen years. For her, the weekly day of rest would not begin until the family had breakfasted and the two cars were cleaned. But this was a better household than many she had worked in, and it had been the Senora of the house who had taken Juana along to register the day she went herself.

The Senora didn't expect her maid to remember to actually go along and vote, but alone though she may be at the moment of suffrage, Juana had no intention of forgetting.

When her duties were done she went to her room at the end of the yard to change her skirt and brush her hair, then she left to take the second class bus out to the remote suburbs where her two children lived with her parents.

She had a boy and a girl, both by different fathers who had abandoned Juana, and so she worked in the city to support the two generations who would be anxiously expecting her now. On the bus, every nerve in Juana's body was strained with the effort of holding in her head all she had been told about the balloting procedure.

She was only vaguely aware of the purpose of the elections — to elect a new Senate — and was totally ignorant of the issues at stake. It had never occurred to her to ask herself whether the Government had provided her with a reasonable standard of living, or whether any other might give her an opportunity of a better life. She was aware only of her duty to vote.

The campaign propaganda had seen to it that those who couldn't read knew that the ruling party was represented on the ballot slip by the colours of the national flag. Simple enough. Red, White and Green. Juana had known that from early childhood.

When she got off the bus she walked through streets which were unusually sombre for a Sunday, but she knew this was due more to the fact that the bars were closed and the sale of alcohol prohibited than to the import of the elections. The two children were waiting at the door, excited at the prospect of an outing, after she had voted Juana was going to

take them to the park. Inside the two room house, Juana's father was lying on the bed, there was little else to do on such a dry Sunday, and her mother, as usual was cooking. Juana didn't linger in the house, but set off confidently through the muddy streets which had been ravaged by a particularly heavy rainy season, while the children ran on ahead.

But as the wooden table came into view on the corner of the street her nerve failed her, and she walked straight past.

"Mama", her seven year old son cried in amazement, "I thought you were going to vote?"

"Yes son, I am", she replied, blushing and looking round to see whether anyone had heard him.

"But there it is — that's where you have to do it."

There was no alternative. In her son's eyes it was all very easy, she couldn't let him down.

She turned round and walked up to the man holding each child by the hand, feeling their eyes solemnly staring at the man who was asking for her registration card.

"Here Senora", the man handed her a slip of paper.

What was she supposed to do with it? Her bewildered look told him everything.

"Take it to that table over there", the man said, standing up to stretch his legs.

But what to do with it there? All previous instructions had gone out of her head. The television commercial explaining everything so carefully . . . she had seen it at least fifty times, but what had it said?

If at that moment someone had asked her what the colours of the national flag were, she would not have been able to answer.

"What do I have to do with it?" she stammered, her wild eyes meeting the man's.

"Put your cross next to one of the parties, fold the paper and put it in the black box", he replied patiently.

He was used to this type of question.

Juana stabbed at the paper with the pencil she found dangling from a piece of string. Her cross landed at the top of the paper.

"I put it at the top", she almost shouted.

"Ay Senora", the tired voice replied. "The parties are further down on the paper. Remember", he said speaking slowly and distinctly now as if he'd said everything a hundred times already that day, "The P.P.U. has the symbol of the national flag — the same colours."

And sure enough there it was, a red, white and green circle, she remembered now, and there underneath was a blue and yellow circle, and there were two others below that. But Juana was beyond caring what the others meant, she made another cross, and with her head bowed she folded the paper and dropped it into the black box.

Nobody was taking any notice of her, the dilemma of the illiterate was a common occurrence, especially among women.

Juana slunk away from the ballot box, unable to meet her son's eyes. She had expected to feel a moment of dignity, just one moment in a lifetime of humiliation, but there it was again, the familiar feeling washing over her in waves of shame.

At the end of the street she caught hold of her children's hands, and as they ran for shelter from the afternoon downpour, she silently vowed never to vote again. □

by
Margaret Rodriguez

Essex Road Women's Health Group
select some alarming examples of the

medical advertising which GP's are
bombarded with.

PILLS for all ILLS

Doctors over-prescribe mind-affecting drugs like tranquilisers and anti-depressants to the tune of some three thousand million pills a year. The message of the ads shown encourages hard-pressed GPs to see pills as the cure for all women's problems. There is not a hint that real difficulties like bad housing, isolation and lack of child-care facilities are destructive conditions which can and ought to be changed, they appear merely as factors which "can cause anxiety neuroses in persons with a low resistance to stress".

In drug advertising these "persons" are overwhelmingly portrayed as women. A sample of issues of the *American Journal of Psychiatry* studied by three American doctors revealed that 64% of drug ads showed women as patients. In a single issue of *Psychiatric News* women featured in 11 out of 14 ads. Responding to a follow-up survey on their reactions to the use of women in these ads, 45% of doctors said that the ads did affect their attitudes. One doctor wrote that "they tend to perpetuate general trends of thinking of women as weaker, more sick". (*Ms. Magazine*, October 1975).

So in quite subtle ways the equation femaleness = mental illness goes on being made. And women's complaints about their lives can go on being ignored and dismissed.



calm, alert, competent with **Stemetil** at work

Anxiety can be very disconcerting for the switchboard operator, whose busy routine requires clear thought, quick wits, and sound judgement. On 'Stemetil', however, she is soon back to normal, her anxiety relieved. 'Stemetil' is the ideal tranquillizer for her — and for anyone who stays on at work, because it calms without producing drowsiness, fogging thought, or in any way impairing mental faculties.

and at home with **Triptafen**



and at home with **Ludiomil**

"Adverse circumstances, such as too many children and too little money are recognised causes of neurotic depression or anxiety neuroses in persons with a low resistance to stress. These neuroses usually respond best to therapy with *Triptafen DA* or *Triptafen Minor*."

"The depression which can follow an adverse change in circumstances, such as living in a high rise flat, is usually of the neurotic or reactive kind. These types of depression usually respond best to therapy with *Triptafen DA* or *Triptafen Minor* . . ."

By the end of the day she'll know why you chose Nobrium.



and at work at home with Nobrium

Now, nurses can look
as feminine
in theatre as out!

"For the first time women who work in operating theatres can look and feel feminine whilst they carry out their duties. They will work more happily and more effectively for this reason . . .

"All patients, particularly the nervous ones, will be much reassured by the sight of sisters and nurses looking attractive, feminine *and therefore normal* in an otherwise sterile world."



and at work with Femininity

Info..Odds & Sods..Advice

Childbirth at Home

My sister-in-law is pregnant for the first time and wishes to have the baby at home - we are two families living together. Today she visited our doctor who told her there was no way she could have it at home - he gave the usual arguments like "what would happen if you haemorrhaged" and "what would happen if the baby wasn't breathing properly". He also said he would take her off the register if she insisted on having it at home.

In Liskeard when you go into labour you are driven 20 miles in an ambulance to the nearest hospital which is at Plymouth. There are no nursing homes or maternity homes in or near here and we would like some medical help when the time comes but don't know how to get it. Our finances are not very good.

There are two others who wish to have their babies at home so we hope to start a group to fight for it. If you could put us in touch with any groups down here that we could get together with we would appreciate it. Also can you tell us if there is any National group that could help us.

Yours in sisterhood
Gill Stephens
Liskeard, Cornwall

★ *Contact the Pressure Group for Home Confinements c/o Margaret Whyte, 17 Laburnam Avenue, Durham. This is a pressure group to ensure that home confinements are available to women, and that they aren't completely phased out. Contact AIMS too (Association for Improvements in Maternity Services). Write to Anne Taylor (Sec), West Hill Cottage, Exmouth Place, Hastings, Sussex. I notice too in their January Newsletter that an AIMS group is being planned to start in Cornwall. Contact Elizabeth Nickels, 5 Tretherras Close, Newquay, Cornwall. Tel: Newquay 5472.*

Hysterectomy

Have any readers who've had a hysterectomy experienced side effects and if so, what?

Just after my operation, a few years ago, I felt no ill effects though my doctor had told me that I might put on weight and I might become depressed. However over the years I've noticed things developing which never occurred to me when I was younger and I can only put them down to the operation. Now a friend has confirmed my beliefs by saying that she has suffered the symptoms since her operation.

One phenomenon is that our blood pressures seem to be lower and fingers and toes get numb very easily. I get much more flatulence than I used to and an allergy has developed that can be a great nuisance. My present doctor doesn't take me seriously.

Yours sincerely,
N. Stones
Bristol

North Norfolk Group

I live in rural North Norfolk and would like to hear from other women in this area who would be interested in a group. It is very easy, living away from large towns, to become isolated and withdrawn into one's day-to-day life, and to be out of touch with much that is taking place around us. I would like to be part of a group that was not only aware of those problems that are particular to the women's movement, but also in touch with the other areas of need in this locality.

If anyone is interested in forming such a group, please write to:

Tricia Warner
68 Crossdale St, Northrepps,
Cromer, Norfolk

Arab Women and Festival of Islam Year
We are going to organise a demonstration to coincide with some event in the Festival of Islam Year.

We would welcome support, write-up, contacts with Arab women, help with costumes and media contact.

Yours in sisterhood
Elinor Parker
Kingston Area Women's Group

Man Against Sexism

I write to you as one of what I hope is a large number of your male readers and I hope you will be able to help me and other sympathetic brothers.

For the last six months or so I have been trying to make contact with a 'Men Against Sexism' group, or any men's group, preferably in the Harrow NW London area. Although I have received names and addresses of contacts from sources such as the Earlham St Workshop, these have all proved useless, out of date, no longer interested, or just plain wrong. I have tried advertising, both locally and in more widely circulated magazines. I have replied to Box No ads in *Time Out*. I have written to groups in Birmingham and Leeds. Out of this - nothing.

Can any of your readers - women or men - tell me anything about any men's groups, whether in my area or elsewhere? I would be interested and grateful to hear from anyone who has been involved with such a group, and particularly interested to hear from any men who would like to form a group in this area.

Yours in brotherhood,
Rob Lewis,

50a Paines Lane, Pinner, Middlesex.

PS And why is it the men's groups keep such low profiles?

★ Unfortunately there is no co-ordinating body for Men against Sexism groups, although groups do exist in London and elsewhere in the country. But because of this lack of organisation it is impossible to know where they are. However I am sending you the address of a group I do know of that has just started in North London, which it may be possible to join.

There is also a group in Sussex which is intending to publish a newsletter. For details write c/o Tony Wainwright, 25 Friars Walk, Lewes, Sussex.

"WHERE
HAVE ALL THE
MEN'S GROUPS GONE?"



ACADEMY

CINEMA TWO

NOW!

KAREN ARTHUR'S

'LEGACY'

with a riveting performance

by JOAN HOTCHKIS



"A marvellously subtle penetrating intuitive witty and ultimately sad revelation. A genuinely original experience." *Evening Standard*

"A tour de force -- this searing study goes deeply into a woman's subconscious than any film I remember." *Evening News*

"Angry, funny . . . looks and feels remarkably true. A film of remarkable moral and emotional tension." *Guardian*

"Wonderfully well sustained in the writing and performance." *Daily Telegraph*

LOCARNO: Best Film Award

CHICAGO: Silver Medal

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30	factory son "The Boss's Darling"	Davies, Chris	Usage Terms: © Chris Davies (enquiries@arenapal.com). This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
31	Work to Role	Wandor, Michelene	Usage Terms: © Michelene Wandor
31	waitress song with Clair Chapman	Davies, Chris	Usage Terms: © Chris Davies (enquiries@arenapal.com). This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
32	I am a victor of migraines ...	Barrington, Judy	Usage Terms: © Judith Barrington
32	last night when you fell asleep in my arms ...	Barrington, Judy	Usage Terms: © Judith Barrington
32	Fiction & Poetry	Fell, Alison	Usage Terms: © Alison Fell
33	One Woman's Abortion	Arnold, Marie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for One Woman's Abortion. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
33	crowd		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for crowd. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
34	One Woman's Abortion	Arnold, Marie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for One Woman's Abortion. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
35	One Woman's Abortion	Arnold, Marie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for One Woman's Abortion. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
36	One Woman's Abortion	Arnold, Marie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for One Woman's Abortion. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
38	Flying	Dick, Sophie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Flying. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
39	Flying	Dick, Sophie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Flying. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
			Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Sally-Ann's Umbrella.

39	Sally-Ann's Umbrella	Mann, Andrew	Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
39	Nobody's Family Is Going to Change	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
39	Book illustration: Nobody's Family is going to change	Fitzhugh, Louise	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Book illustration: Nobody's Family is going to change. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
40	My Name Is Rosa Luxembourg	Wandor, Michelene	Usage Terms: © Michelene Wandor
40	Joan Scott	Spence, Jo	Usage Terms: © Jo Spence Memorial Archive
41	Jaws	Pollock, Griselda	Usage Terms: © Griselda Pollock
42	Jaws	Pollock, Griselda	Usage Terms: © Griselda Pollock
42	Film poster: Jaws		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Film poster: Jaws. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
43	The Vote	Rodriguez, Margaret	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for The Vote. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
44	Pills for all Ills	Essex Road Women's Health Group	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Pills for all Ills. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
45	Pills for all Ills	Essex Road Women's Health Group	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Pills for all Ills. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.